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ABSTRACT

This guide reports on classroom research conducted by experienced teachers of adult basic education students of limited English and/or native language literacy. Most chapters are illustrated with excerpts from instructional materials, and provide practical information about classroom techniques and activities. Chapters include: "Introduction" (Christine Howell); "Designing Materials" (Jenny Ramm); "Developing Map Reading Skills" (Linda Achren); "Catering for Beginning ESL Learners in Mixed-Ability Classes" (Margaret Huntington); "Preparing a Unit of Work" (Jenny Green); "Recycling Activities" (Lilliana Hajncl) [Note: this name is spelled three different ways in the book]; "Adapting Teaching Strategies" (Anne Badenhorst); and "A Class Report" (Lilliana Hajncl). (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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ED 394 360

CLASSROOM CONSIDERATIONS

A practical guide to teaching beginning language and literacy

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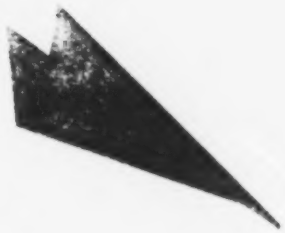

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INTRODUCTION

This book documents classroom-based research done by six AMES teachers, all of whom are experienced in teaching adult learners with differing levels of oracy in English, but very little literacy in either their first language, or in English. In addition, learners with this profile often have very low levels of formal education. The collection of articles provides a very practical guide for teachers based on sound language and literacy teaching theory and on a clear understanding of adult learning principles.

The teachers of adult beginner learners who have contributed their ideas and examples of their practice to this book are concerned to make the best use of the knowledge and skills learners bring with them. At the same time they acknowledge that learners with low levels of formal education or lack of classroom skills often proceed slowly and need a lot of support in their classroom learning.

The chapters by **Jenny Ramm and Lynda Achren** remind us of the cognitive and linguistic demands made of learners who are developing text awareness and beginning literacy skills. The language learning of all beginner learners relies heavily on the support of a meaningful context together with activation of background knowledge. Ramm and Achren suggest a number of ways in which teachers can incorporate the development of learning skills and knowledge into classroom activities.

At beginner level, the teaching aims to develop the basis for grammatical and pragmatic competence in English language and literacy within the context of Australian society. The chapter by **Jenny Green** describes an integrated approach to language and literacy in which the learning taking place in each of the four skill areas, speaking, listening, reading and writing, each providing scaffolding for the others.

This is particularly necessary in classes where there are mixed levels of proficiency in language and literacy, as **Margaret Huntington** illustrates. While learners may need to develop one skill (eg writing) to a level commensurate with other skills, language skills do not develop separately. Oral skill development supports literacy development and vice versa. Appropriate methodology for beginner learners promotes integration of the four skills, while recognising the different purposes of spoken and written texts.

Another goal of teaching low level learners of English is to develop the learner's capacity to make the most of all the learning opportunities available to them. The chapters by **Liliana Hajnel** and **Anne Badenhorst** provide very practical suggestions for how this can be done, and as in all of the other chapters, how the gradual development of 'learning how to learn' strategies can be included in all classroom activities.

Christine Howell

Professional Development

AMES Victoria

1

DESIGNING MATERIALS

Jenny Ramm

Teaching materials for learners with minimal formal education

When teaching learners who have had little formal education — that is, those with 0 to 7 years of formal schooling — teachers soon discover that these students react differently from students who have had more formal education, to the kind of teaching methodology and materials used. Throughout this book, students with minimal formal education are referred to as low educational background (LEB) learners. What may have been very successful with formal learners might be very confusing for students with little formal education. Because of this, teachers need to keep the characteristics of informal learners in mind when considering the most suitable teaching methodology and when selecting materials for these students. Suitable materials will often be hard to find, so teachers will either have to adapt available materials or develop their own. In this article I will outline a number of practical guidelines and examples for teachers to consider when adapting or developing material for this particular learner group.

Informal learning occurs in a specific and meaningful context, so to make the materials relevant to students, teachers need to localise the content. This means using information about the students in the class or about the local area to develop questionnaires, surveys and other worksheets.

Informal learners learn through observation and imitation, trial and error, not through verbal instruction. Because of this, these learners often have difficulty understanding classroom instructions and distinguishing between the written instructions and the main activity on worksheets. To help overcome this, all worksheets should be clear, with minimal or no step-written instructions. Later, as the students learn the language of instruction, simple instructions can be included on the worksheets. The same instructions should then be recycled on a variety of worksheets to make sure the students understand them.

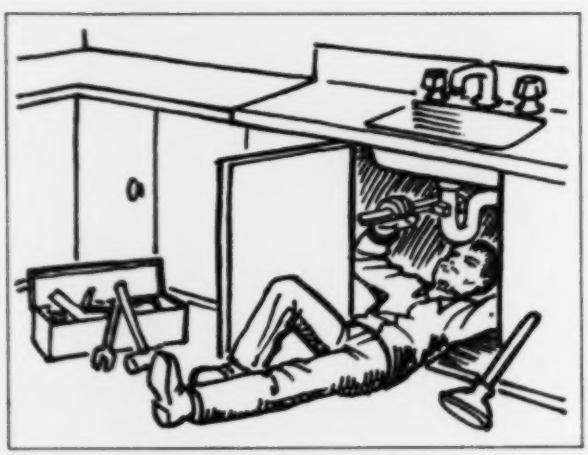
In an informal learning situation, diagrammatic representations are not used because people learn by seeing a real example. To help students understand what graphics in the classroom mean, they must be introduced in a way that makes the meaning obvious. Wherever possible, teachers should start by using real objects to set a meaningful context for the language points they are teaching. These objects can then be replaced by photos or realistic pictures. Later, diagrams or graphic representations can be used. In this way the students gradually move from using only concrete objects to an understanding of abstract diagrams. However, graphics must be clear and realistic, particularly when students are first being introduced to them, so that the students can recognise them easily. All graphics should be simple without any unnecessary items in the background, as these might divert the learners' attention from the main focus of the picture — however, there should be enough detail to make the context clear.

The drawings below of a housewife illustrate some difficulties that could arise. In the first picture it is not clear whether the piece of furniture is a filing cabinet or a chest of drawers. The lack of contextual clues makes it difficult to know if the woman in the picture is an office cleaner or a housewife. In the second picture the lounge suite, television set and painting on the wall help to make it clear that the woman is working at home.

housewife

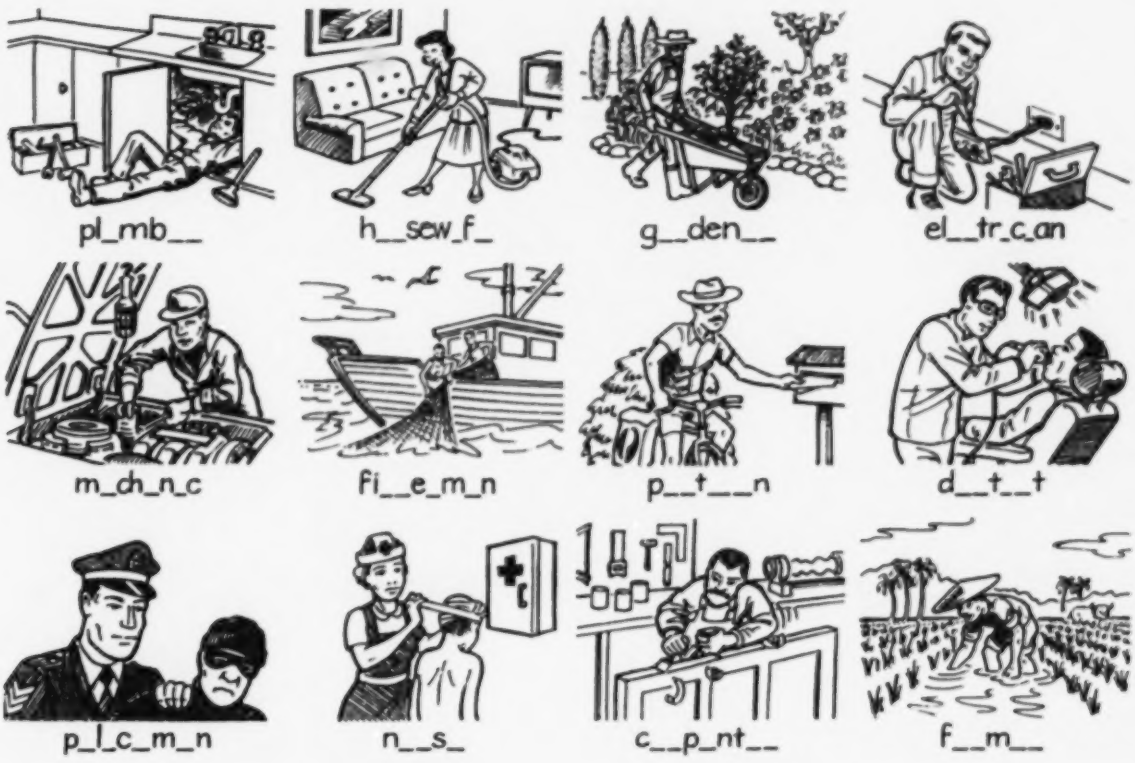
An absence of context can also make pictures difficult to recognise. Students who had never taken any notice of the pipes under their sink might have great difficulty knowing what the first picture is supposed to represent. It is much clearer in the second picture where more familiar items such as a sink and taps are included. This picture should give the students a good idea of what the word *plumber* means when introduced in the context of occupations.

plumber



Before giving any worksheets to students, teachers need to take note of all the skills required to complete the worksheet and see that the students already have all those skills. For example, in this worksheet on occupations, students have to:

- recognise the pictures
- know the names of the occupations
- realise that the words refer to the picture immediately above them
- understand that each line represents one missing letter
- know how to spell the names of the occupations or have a model to copy from.

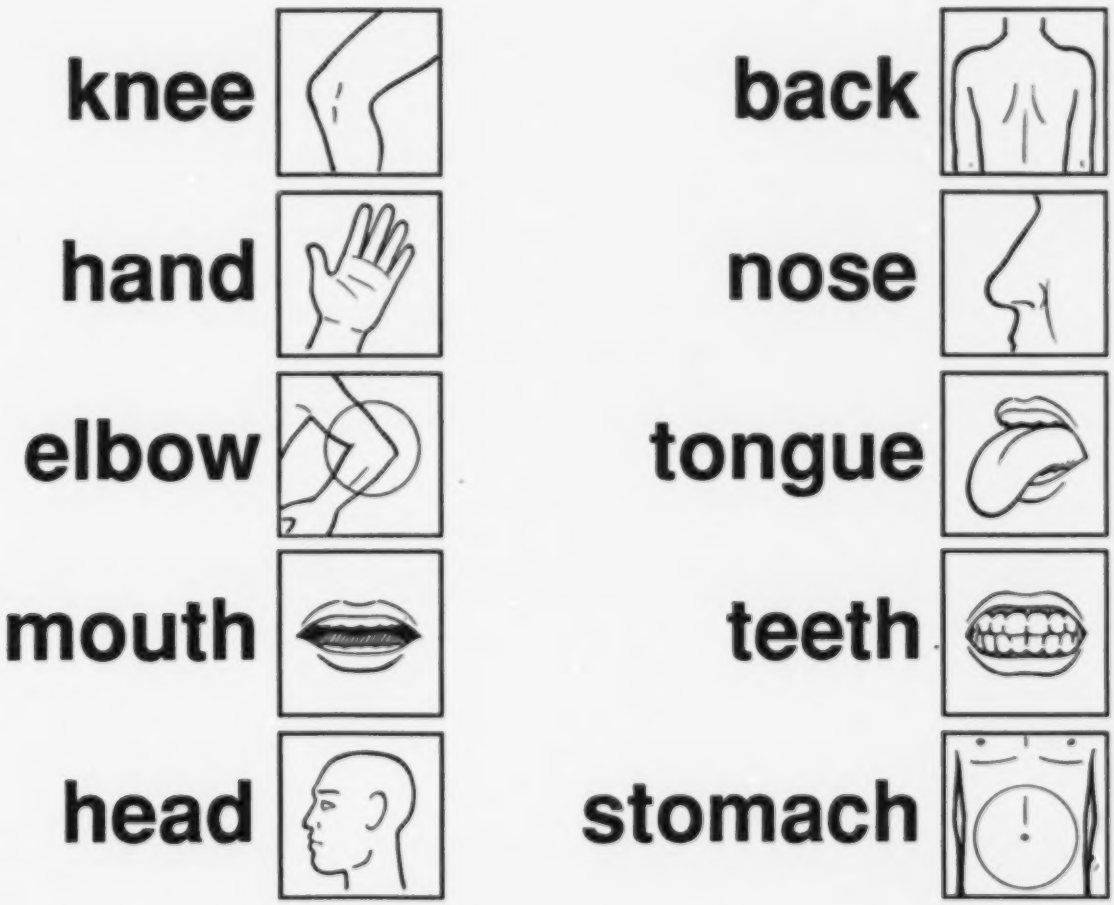


Informal learning addresses immediate needs in real life situations and is not future-oriented — that is, people learn to weave a mat because they need a mat now, not because they want to know how to weave a mat for some time in the future. In this way, informal learning produces immediate visible results rather than abstract skills that may be needed later.

Introducing complex ideas

Materials need to develop the students' language and learning skills in small carefully sequenced stages so that students can see some tangible outcome and don't feel overwhelmed and discouraged. Informal learners also have difficulty transferring skills from one situation to another, as their previous learning experiences would have involved learning practical skills related to a specific context. This means that a range of simpler activities might be needed to lead up to a more complex one, showing how some of the same skills can be adapted for each activity. For example, if you wanted to give your students a crossword puzzle on parts of the body, a sequence of activities like the following might be needed.

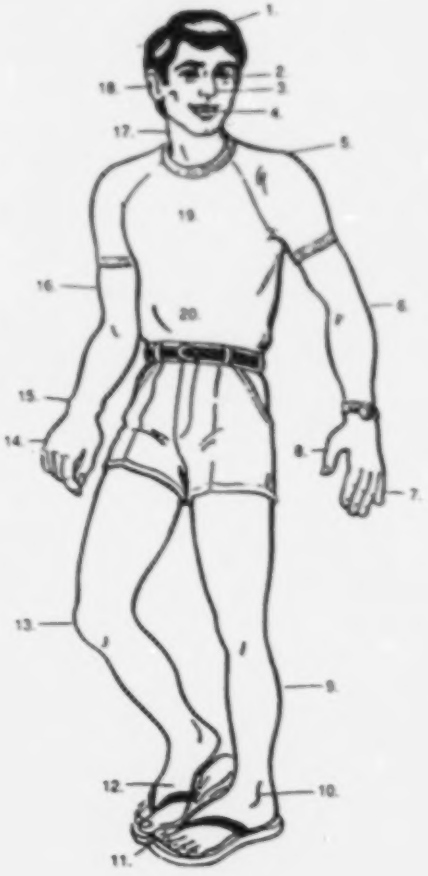
1. Introduce students to the vocabulary for parts of the body by pointing at your arm, leg and so on.
2. Introduce the written words through matching activities where you have flashcards of words and pictures, as in the example below.



3. Give students a labelling exercise, such as the one below, where they have to match the numbered parts of the body with the words on the left side of the page.

Put the number
next to the word

shoulder ___
leg ___
chest ___
ear ___
hand ___
stomach ___
elbow ___
foot ___
knee ___
mouth ___
hair ___
arm ___
eye ___
finger ___
ankle ___
nose ___
wrist ___
toe ___
neck ___
thumb ___



4. Introduce students to the concept of crosswords where words are written across and down, starting from the number in a particular square. Students need to understand that one square represents one letter and that letters that are common in two intersecting words do not need to be written twice. They also should be aware of the convention of writing in block letters when filling in crosswords. In addition, students need to see the relationship between the clues across and the clues down, and the words they have to place in the squares.

   One way to help students understand how to do a crossword is to break it into segments. Firstly, students could try a crossword where all the answers "across" are already filled in and they only need to fill in the "down" answers. They could then try the same crossword with the "down" answers already filled in – students complete the "across" answers. Finally, they could be given either the same or a different crossword with none of the answers given. Here are some examples.

ACROSS

2.
4.
5.
7.
8.

DOWN

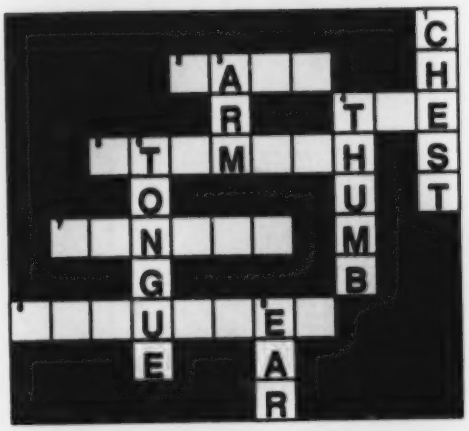
1.
3.
4.
6.
9.

ACROSS

2.
4.
5.
7.
8.

DOWN

1.
3.
4.
6.
9.

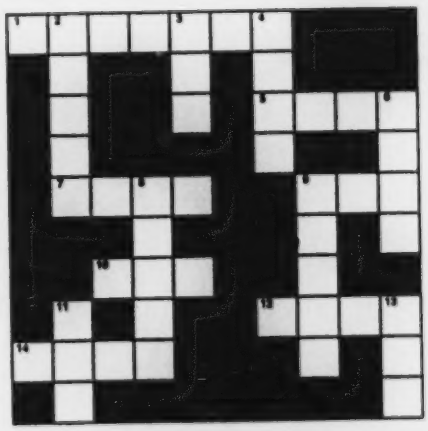


ACROSS

1.
5.
7.
9.
10.
12.
14.

DOWN

2.
3.
4.
6.
8.
9.
11.
13.



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Recycling content is important

Language content needs to be recycled in order to reinforce these newly acquired skills. This needs to be done while students for example, continue to develop their formal learning skills. The students start with a simple form where they are expected to write on the lines. Later they are given a different form requiring similar information, but this time the students have to write in boxes. They have to understand that when they write in boxes they should use block letters and they should leave a blank between words and between numbers and words.

NAME: _____
(Surname) (Given Names)

ADDRESS: _____

_____ Postcode ____

TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____

AGE: _____

MARITAL STATUS: _____

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: _____

NATIONALITY: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

SURNAME

GIVEN NAMES

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE NUMBER

DATE OF BIRTH
DAY MONTH YEAR

AGE

MARITAL STATUS

NUMBER OF CHILDREN

NATIONALITY

The simple surveys below also show how more complex activities and skills can gradually be introduced. The examples of surveys here are all on different topics, so students would need to have studied these areas before such surveys could be conducted.

Firstly, students could be given a survey where the questions are provided and the students have only two pieces of information to complete on each person they interview.

How do you spell your first name?

How do you spell your last name?

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME

Later they could be asked to conduct a survey where they are given headings only and have to work out the appropriate questions themselves. More content has been introduced.

GIVEN NAME	SURNAME	STREET	SUBURB

Then they could be given a survey which is formatted differently. The information for each person is filled in vertically rather than horizontally, as in the previous surveys.

	Name:	Name:	Name:	Name
How many brothers have you got?				
How many sisters have you got?				
How many children have you got?				
How many daughters have you got?				

Another example of a different kind of survey is one where students have to circle the responses of the people they interview. In this example they circle Y for Yes and N for No.

Do you like	Name		Name		Name		Name	
icecream	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
snakes	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
flowers	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
spiders	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
chillies	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
mice	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
swiming	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
cooking	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
reading	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
watching TV	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
singing	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N

Methodology

First appearances may suggest that the materials used for low educational background learners are no different from those used with other beginning level students. The main differences come in the way these materials are used.

An important starting point in using materials with LEB learners is to determine the skills required by the students when they use the materials. It is important to take note of what language content and skills students have to learn before they can attempt each activity.

To overcome the difficulties these learners have following spoken and written instructions, teachers should demonstrate activities and exercises first, before students attempt them. This could be done by using overhead transparencies and asking the whole class to do parts of the exercise on the whiteboard. Then, when they receive their individual worksheets, they will be able to imitate the model they saw on the whiteboard.

Thus, gradually, students can be taught the language of instructions in a relevant context. Teachers often worry that demonstrating the exercise first before doing it individually makes it repetitive and boring for the students. However, this is rarely the case, as the students are learning so many new skills and practising English at the same time.

The goal of all materials used with LEB learners should be to develop their formal learning strategies. This is done most easily if the language content of the exercises is limited, until the skills required to complete the exercises are developed. While students are still learning the skills involved in particular exercises, they might not fully understand the purpose behind these exercises or what the teacher expects from them. For example, students might have to do several surveys before they realise that just filling in the blanks on the page is not the aim of the exercise. At first the students might ask the questions in their first language instead of English, or copy the answers from other students. After doing several surveys and with guidance from the teachers, they will eventually realise that one of the aims of the survey is to practise speaking English and listening to information given in English.

After students have become familiar with the mechanics of doing different types of exercises, teachers can increase the language content while recycling the skills that students have learnt. This constant recycling of content and skills will help the students retain what has been taught.

Continual recycling of the language taught in class in necessary for these learners, as learning through verbal instruction is not a feature of informal learning. The same content should be presented in slightly different forms to ensure that students have control of the language they've learnt. This will also help them to see the same language can be transferred to different situations.

In a similar way, the formal learning skills that students acquire, such as filling information into a grid, sequencing items, and arranging items according to alphabetical order, should be used in different contexts to show how skills can be transferred. This can be done through conducting surveys using different formats for compiling the information, playing games and varying the types of worksheets used.

To help LEB learners benefit from ESL instruction in formal classrooms, teachers need to adapt their teaching methodology to suit the students' informal learning strategies. This allows the teacher to develop the strategies that the students bring with them to the classroom while gradually introducing formal learning strategies that will help the students succeed in AMES and other Australian classes they may attend.

Literacy problems

Many LEB learners have difficulty with reading and writing. Literacy skills must be taught and all materials used in class should be exploited as far as possible to help students develop their literacy skills. Activities where students match words and pictures, arrange words in alphabetical order or group words that begin or end with particular sounds all help with literacy.

Curriculum guidelines

In addition to these methodological issues, there are several other points that teachers need to keep in mind when planning a course for LEB learners.

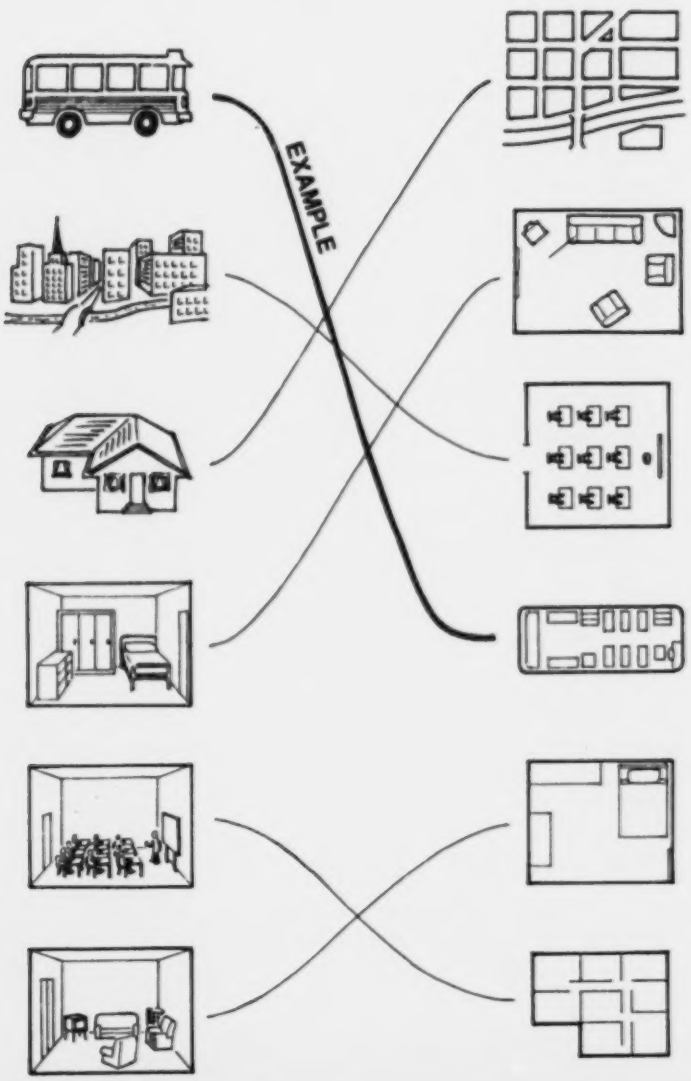
- Start from what the students know and then introduce the unknown, linking all new content to previous learning.
- Begin with concrete examples and objects and gradually introduce more abstract ideas.
- Make the content relevant to the students' lives.
- Teach the formal learning skills that are required in the classroom activities and worksheets.
- Break topics down into manageable units that don't overwhelm the students. Be aware of the number of new skills and the amount of new language you are expecting them to learn and remember.
- Give the students only one task at a time rather than confusing them with a variety of different tasks.
- Recognise the number of skills that students need to have to successfully complete any activity.
- Make sure your expectations of the students' learning pace are realistic, considering the length of time needed to learn and remember new language and skills.

By starting at a point familiar to the students, both in the type of methodology used and the materials chosen for use in class, students will be able to relate better to what is taught. Then, as the teacher gradually introduces more formal learning techniques, the students will develop the kind of learning skills that will allow greater options for further study or workplace training in the future.

2

DEVELOPING MAP-READING SKILLS

Lynda Achren



Result of a test for the concept of aerial view.
Student (6 years's education) comments:
"We don't have this in El Salvador"

Ours is a very map-literate society. Every town has a map showing 'You are here', and every shopping centre has a floor plan to assist shoppers. In English language classrooms, not only is the street directory often considered an important resource, but floor plans are invariably presented to assist the learners to acquire vocabulary associated with rooms in the house and with furniture and its location.

Teachers of low-educational background (LEB) learners are aware of the stumbling blocks faced by our learners in the formal ESL classroom, of how abstract graphic representations cannot be used by the students as a language tool because they are unfamiliar to the students. In a classroom for those whose schooling went beyond the basics, these materials are used to reinforce language, to aid its acquisition and to allow practice in a realistic context.These materials are used as language learning tools. In LEB classrooms, they cannot have this function, as many of these materials do not have any place in the students' lives. There is no point in explaining to students where to go for an interview and helping them to remember by sketching a simple street map. The lines you draw may not help them: the drawing may have no meaning for students nor will it help them practise asking for directions in a classroom pair work activity.

We could perhaps choose to use language learning activities which do not involve abstract concepts. After all, it is possible to learn the basic vocabulary of housing without using a floor plan. The problem with this approach is that we are then hindering the students' progress:

- in negotiating daily life in Australia where such skills as the recognition of abstract graphic representations are taken for granted.
- towards autonomous learning. Many language learning materials that the student could use for self study incorporate, for example, floor plans, to teach about housing and street maps for directions.

The ramifications of the above for the students' working lives have increased with the push towards multi-skilling and the necessary achievement of basic competencies through work-based training. As Ken Willing said, in the editorial of *Prospect, 7.2*, p.6:

> Adoption of competency based standards, necessarily including specifications of language and literacy skills, carries the potential for rebounding significantly upon the working lives of NESB immigrants.

He also says:

> . . . the task demands of even blue-collar work now increasingly involve recourse to language in written modes.

The literacy skills necessary to access these written modes are now accepted as including reading graphic representations.

The *Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework* (1992) draft competency statements for adult reading and writing include being able, at Level 1, to 'know the purpose of a text from the layout and graphics.' (p.18)

Similarly, the AMEP *Certificate in Spoken and Written English* includes 'can read diagrammatic/graphic texts' as one of its competencies.

At its most basic, reading a map requires the understanding of the concept of aerial view. Consequently the teacher of LEB students needs to ensure the students are given plenty of opportunity to master this concept. The skill needs to be integrated with oral and written language development, each stage monitored to assess the level of abstraction required and recycled, often in a variety of forms, to ensure transfer of the skill to other situations.

The skill of reading a street directory, however, is highly complex, involving not only an understanding of aerial view, but also of using grids, alphabetical order, symbols and abbreviations.

The following series of activities is designed to integrate these aspects into the language and literacy activities of low-level (LEB) classrooms and to build up the concepts needed for reading maps and using street directories. Many of the activities outlined will be familiar to teachers of low-level classes. The differences are not so much in the materials or the associated activities, as in their aim. Competence is built up in a spiral sequence; the concept is encountered by the student again and again during the course, or over a series of courses, each time at a more complex or demanding level.

Classroom floor plan

A plan of the classroom is a concrete way of introducing the concept of map reading. The students can relate what they see about them to its position on the plan.

Associated language — classroom objects
— prepositions of place

Drawing a plan on the board

Involve the class in the drawing up of this first plan. For example:

TR: We're going to draw our classroom. First we need four walls (draws the walls). Here's the board (draws the board). What else can we draw? (indicates the door).

ST: Door.

TR: The door (draws the door). What else?

When the plan is complete, check the students' understanding by asking them to name each item on the plan. Label each item as it is named to build up the students sight vocabulary and deal with one or two aspects of the written form to build word attack skills, for example, the double 'oo' in 'floor' and 'door'. Ask the students to read back the names of the items.

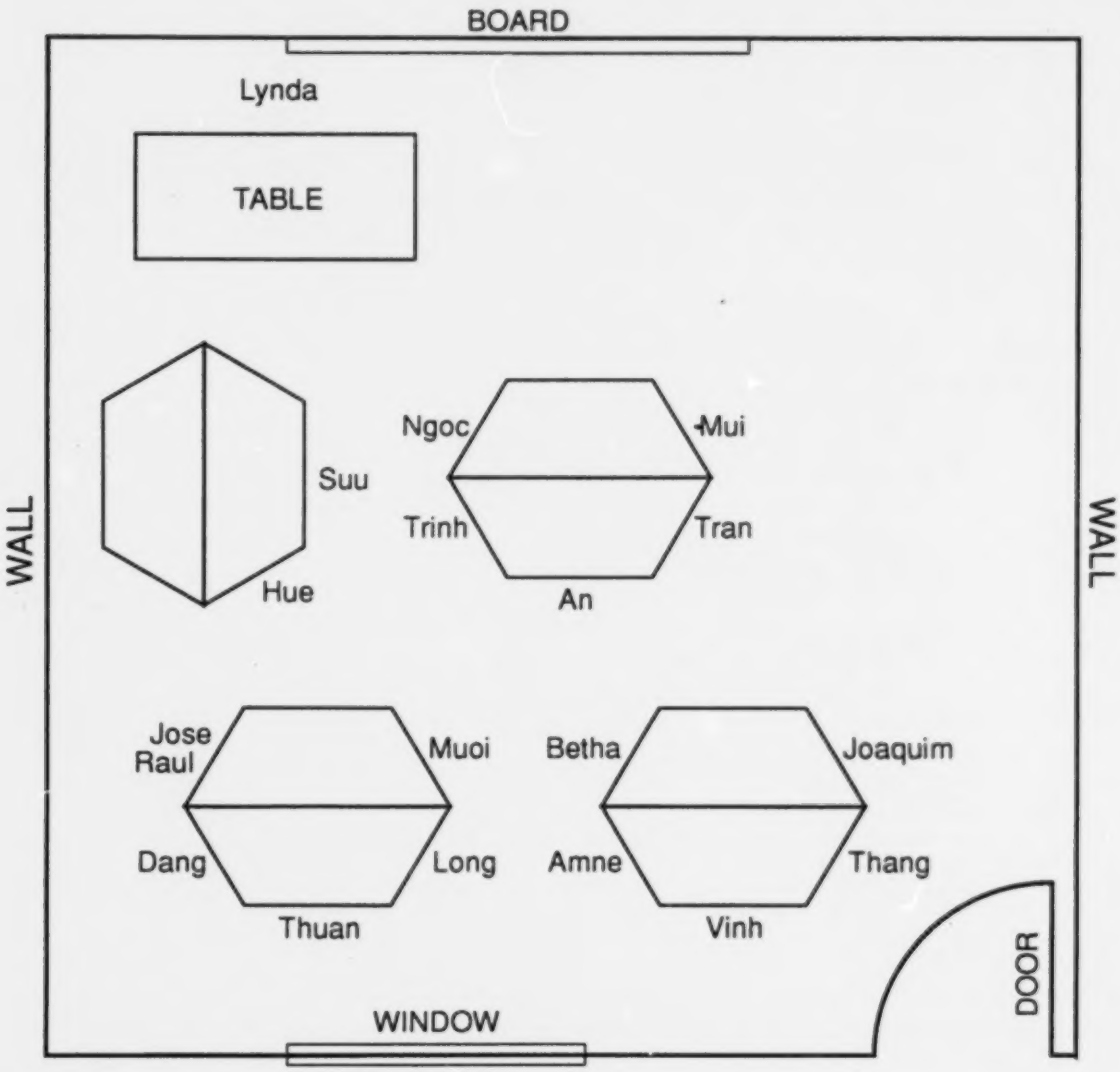
Finally, have some students write their names in their seating position on the plan. Others can describe their position. For example:

ST: I'm next to Mui.

If Mui's name is already on the board, the speaker's name can be written in. If not, a further description will be needed. For example:

TR: But where is Mui?

ST: Mui is opposite Ngoc.



Where is Mui? Mui is next to Tran.
Where is Thuan? Thuan is between Long and Dang.
Where is Hue? _____
Where is Tran? _____
Where are you? _____

Recycling the floor plan

Transfer the floor plan to an OHT to be reintroduced, with accompanying oral work, another day. This time it can be accompanied by a written worksheet.

Use the floor plan OHT to set up different groupings. It is important to find ways of continually recycling the floor plan to facilitate its recognition. This can be done by using it as a tool for organising group or

pair work. Rub the students names off the OHT of the original floor plan and rewrite them in a new position so that students will be sitting with and working with a different group of people. The students then have to change their position according to the OHT. Initially the students may have to be helped to find their new seat but they will become more proficient each time the tool is used. It will be necessary to monitor the students' facility with the concept to gauge when to move on to the introduction of the next step.

Some activities for group work

Reinforce prepositions of place by:

- *using cuisenaire rods.* After a demonstration by the teacher involving the whole class, a student gives instructions to other group members. For example:

  Take four green rods and make a square.

  Put a white rod in the middle.

  Put a red rod on the left of the square.

- *dictating a drawing.* Again, after a whole class demonstration, a student gives instructions to other group members:

  Draw a house in the middle.

  Draw a tree on the left of the house.

  Draw a bicycle behind the tree.

Practise language for the introduction of a house plan by:

- *playing a board game* using the vocabulary of furniture. The board can be photocopied from *Art on the Run* and the furniture pictures from the *Literacy Resource Kit.*

Each group has a board, a die, a different colored counter for each member and a set of furniture pictures with the name of the item written on the back (for reading skills). Each group member in turn throws the die and moves the appropriate number of places. Another group member holds out a picture card to the one whose turn it is and asks, 'What's this?' If a satisfactory answer is not given, the person must go back three places. The winner is the first one to reach the finish.

If the board game is unfamiliar to the students it is a good idea to put it on an OHT and introduce it first as a whole class activity in which the groups compete against each other. Blu-tack can be used to stick each group's counter on to the whiteboard as it marks their position in the game. The game can then be played in groups the next day.

Alphabetical order

Students can work in groups to list the words of known items of furniture in alphabetical order, either by the first letter only, or by the second or third letter depending on the students ability.

Grid Game

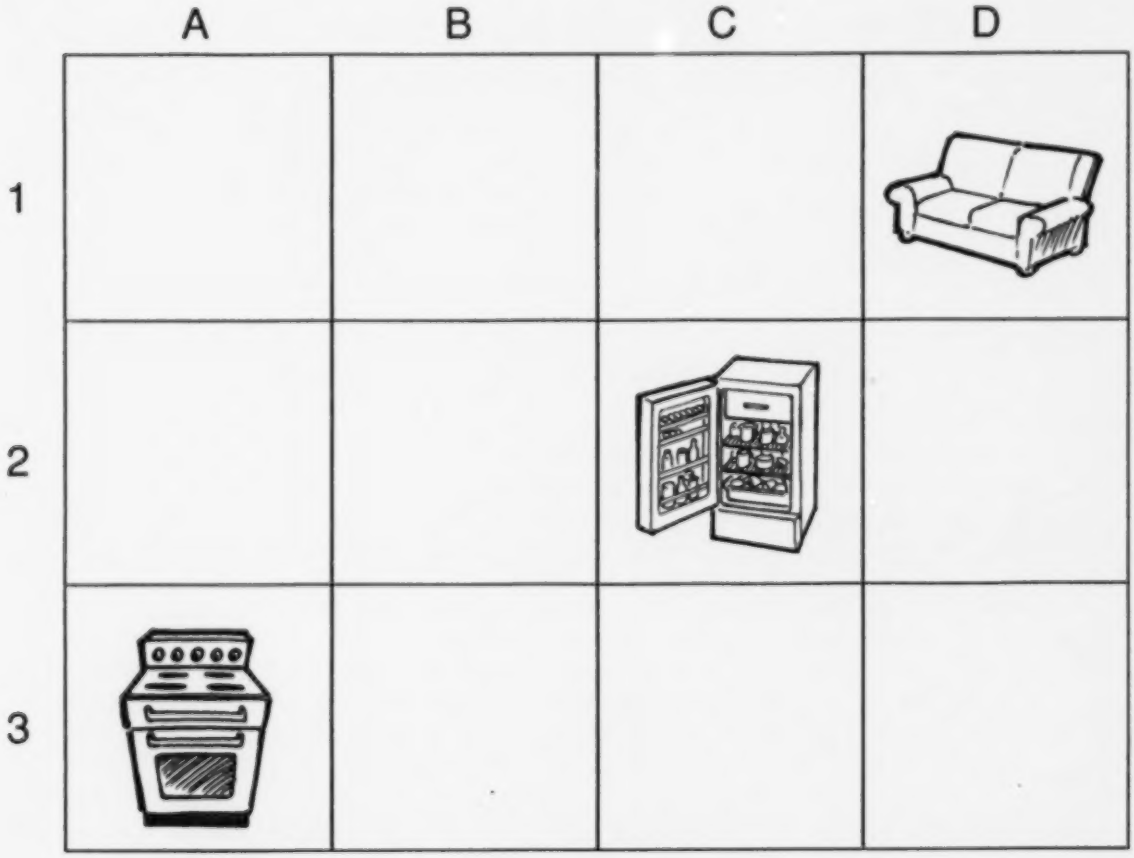
Each student has eight furniture pictures and a three by four grid, marked **A B C D** along the top four squares and **1 2 3** down the side.

Students take it in turns to dictate the position of the pictures on the grid. For example:

Put the sofa in square D1

Put the stove in square A3

Once again, if the grid format is unfamiliar to the students, it will need to be introduced initially in the form of a class activity using the board or an OHT. The pictures can be Blu-tacked into position on the board. This can be followed by a demonstration of the game involving the whole class with individual grids but with the instructions given by the teacher.



Housing floor plans

> Once the students have mastered the classroom floor plan they can be introduced to a less concrete example (in that they cannot see the objects around them.) As each new element being introduced is in the plan, it is important that the students are familiar with the language to be used in the activity so as not to overload them with too many new items.

Livingroom floor plan (Worksheets 1 and 2 on pages 24, 25)

Using an OHT of the livingroom worksheet, ask the students to identify the items of furniture they see in both the pictorial representation and the floor plan. Label the items as they name them, deal with aspects of the written form to develop word attack skills and have the students read back the names.

Ask the students to describe the location of each item of furniture so that all language necessary to complete Worksheet 2 has been dealt with orally. The worksheet consists of a short reading passage, a cloze exercise and a visual and written reminder of all the words necessary to complete the cloze.

Bedroom floor plan (Worksheet 3 on page 26)

Introduce the bedroom floor plan using an OHT and following the same steps as for the livingroom floor plan. Rub the words off the board and give the students a worksheet each to label the items of furniture. Once again, all the necessary words are on the worksheet so that the student does not have to know how to spell the word but does have to be able to recognise its written form. A cloze activity similar to the one used with the livingroom floor plan can also be developed.

Reinforcing aerial view (Worksheet 4 on page 27)

For this activity each student needs a worksheet on which to link the pictorial representation with its aerial view.

Floor plan of a house (Worksheet 5 on page 28)

This floor plan deliberately incorporates the same livingroom and bedroom layouts as before so that the students can more easily transfer their previous learning to this new situation.

Show the floor plan on an OHT or draw it on the board. Explain that it is a plan of a house. Establish how many rooms there are and elicit the probable names of the rooms. Write a list of the room names for the students to refer to when doing the activity. Explain where the front door is and mark it on the plan.

In this activity the students listen to a description of the location of the rooms and label the rooms on their own floor plan. For example, 'Go in the front door. The living room is on the left.' Do the first couple of descriptions as a class activity, labelling the rooms on the board in order that the students understand what is required before attempting the task alone. On completion of the individual worksheets check the work by completing the plan on the board as a whole class activity.

Recycling the floor plan

- Students label the rooms by following written descriptions.
- Provide different floor plans to use with both written or oral instructions.

- ***Pair work activity.***

Each student needs a floor plan of a house and a set of furniture picture cards. One student arranges the furniture on his/her floor plan and gives oral instructions to the other student so that their furniture arrangement is the same. For example, 'Put the TV in the livingroom, opposite the door.' It will be necessary to demonstrate the game first as a whole class activity with the teacher giving the instructions.

Dictionary game

Each student has a bilingual dictionary in his/her preferred language. Show the students how the dictionary is arranged in alphabetical order and give them some practice in finding words of your choosing.

In groups of four or five, the students first list the names of the rooms in a house in alphabetical order. Then the students take turns in calling an item on the list which all group members then find in the dictionary. The first one to find the word gets a point. The person with the most points at the end of the game is the winner.

Floor plan of the centre

> The floor plan of the centre where the students are learning English is likely to be more complex than a plan of a house. However, the students can relate what they see around them to what they see on the plan. It will, of course, be necessary to draw a floor plan of your own centre on an OHT.

Following directions

Establish the location and names of the rooms at your centre by taking the students on a tour. Read any signs you see on the way and discuss the meaning of any symbolic representations, for example, mens', womens' and disabled persons' toilets, no smoking.

Back in the classroom, write on the board a set of simple directions to an easily accessible room. Check understanding of the language and then give each student a copy of the instructions. We used the following instructions.

1. Go out the door and turn right.
2. Stop at the first door on your left.

Where are you?

Do the activity as a whole class under teacher guidance.

Once back in the classroom, show the OHT of the centre with their classroom marked on it. Take care to orient the plan so that it is lying in the same direction as the actual centre for easier recognition. Talk the students through the activity again, this time marking the route taken on the floor plan with a dotted line, and label the room located.

Choose a few other easily locatable places and have written instructions prepared. Divide the class into groups of four or five and give each group a set of directions to follow. When they come back, if they have successfully followed the directions, ask them to locate the destination on the OHT floor plan. Give them another set of instructions to follow.

When everyone is back in the classroom, again trace the routes taken on the floor plan and label the rooms located. Give each student a copy of the floor plan on which to label the rooms.

Recycling the floor plan

Instructions

Write sets of instructions to slightly more difficult locations. Write a set of instructions for each group. On the first day give each group a different set of instructions. After they have located the room they can label it on their floor plan and complete a cloze passage of their set of instructions. With, for example, four sets of instructions you can recycle the activity over four days, rotating each set until each group has located each place. In this way, the learning is reinforced by repetition with variations and absentees do not miss out on this difficult step.

Variation — find the rod

Hide four different colored cuisenaire rods around the centre. Write out sets of directions to each rod. Divide the class into four groups, each with a different rod to find. You can check that they have found the right rod by its color. When all rods have been found, make new class groupings so that each group has one member from each of the previous groups. Students ask each other, for example:

'Where was your rod ?'

'Outside Room 8'

and mark it on their floor plan.

Locating signs and symbols

A worksheet relevant to your location can be made from the signs and symbols in *Art on the Run.*

Students have a worksheet each and go around the centre writing in where they see the signs.

Grid game using symbols

Students work in pairs or small groups. Each student needs a grid and a set of symbols. The students take it in turns to tell their partner or other group members where to place the symbols on the grid. For example:

'Put the NO SMOKING sign in square B2.'

Locating places using a grid

Introduce this next step by using the centre floor plan familiar to the students. Draw a simple grid over the plan and show how we can use it to locate places. For example:

'Room 2 is in square A2.'

'The door to the library is in square B2.'

Ask the students for the location of other places. Consolidate with a written worksheet in which the students write in the square the numbers of the places.

Introducing an unfamiliar floor plan

The following activities consolidate the use of grids.

Individual work — each student has a floor plan marked with a grid and a list of grid locations as in the previous activity. The task is to label the rooms according to the location given. When the students have finished, recap as a whole class activity using an OHT of the plan.

Group work — each group member has a floor plan marked with a grid and one or two rooms labelled.

Each floor plan has different rooms labelled. The task is to tell the other members of the group the grid reference for the rooms marked so they can label them on their own plan.

Dictionary game

The dictionary game described above can be played with any associated vocabulary, for example, rooms, signs or directions. More able groups can have longer lists of words to find. Alternatively, the words chosen could all begin with the same letter so that the looking is confined to one section but the second or third letter will have to be used for speed of location.

Expanding outwards

Associated language —	names of buildings and local facilities shops and shopping street signs other signs and symbols.

Locating signs and symbols outside the centre

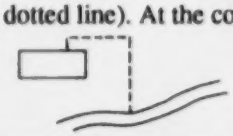
A worksheet relevant to your location can be made from the signs and symbols in *Art on the Run.*

Give each student a copy of the worksheet before taking the class for a walk around the block where your centre is located. On the way talk about the street signs, other signs, the buildings and anything else you see. Students complete their worksheet as they see the signs.

Back in the classroom, recreate the walk by building up a simple map of where you went and describing everything that you put on the map. Include buildings; in so doing you are establishing the vocabulary of the graphic representations you draw. For example:

'Here's the Centre.'

'We went out the door and turned right (demonstrate or mark the route with a dotted line). At the corner we turned right again. The corner has two roads called X and Y (draw these).



'We went down to the river.'

When the map is finished get the students to supply the vocabulary of the representations and label them.

Next the students orally recreate the story of the walk and the teacher writes it on the board as they reconstruct it. The students can copy the map and the story.

Recycling the excursion

Put the story on cardboard strips cut into meaningful phrases. Give the strips out to the students who sequence them on the floor to recreate the story.

Make it into a cloze passage. If your students have trouble with cloze passages, start from the sentence strips on the floor. Cover over some of the words and get the students to read it back to you. They will remember the covered words. Write the covered words in random order on the board. The students can then copy the story, writing in the covered words.

Concentration game

The students can play concentration in small groups using abbreviations of street signs— for example, st. or rd. — and the full word.

Board game with signs and symbols

See Margaret Huntington's game on page 42 using signs and symbols seen by students around their learning centre.

Recycling known activities with new vocabulary

The students can play any of the activities previously described with any of the vocabulary associated with this stage, for example, alphabetical order, dictionary games or grid games.

Local excursions

Plan other walks to facilities in the local area, for example, the shops, library, or a park. Incorporate the above mapping activity into each excursion to ensure facility with the concept.

Street directories

While the process, outlined above, may seem slow to those of us who have these concepts firmly in place, if we look at the starting point of the students we see that there is nothing slow about the amount of learning that is taking place. The learners themselves are not slow, but rather, severely disadvantaged in taking their place in our system.

It is not possible to teach the skills in a hurry. Neither is it necessary, or desirable, to teach them in a block. As the conceptual, linguistic and literacy skills are encountered again and again, they can be built up over a series of courses until the students are ready to begin the difficult task of reading a street directory. Once again, at this point, it is necessary to begin in as concrete a way as possible: start with the local area with which the students are familiar and with which they have already built up a graphic understanding through the mapping work associated with their excursions.

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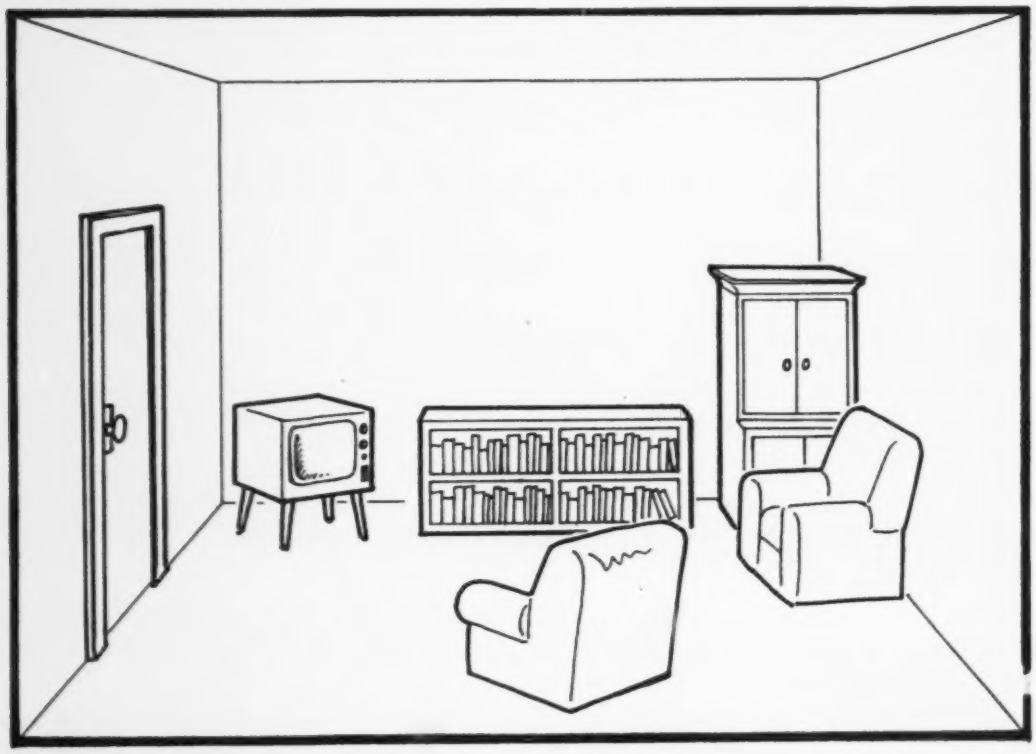
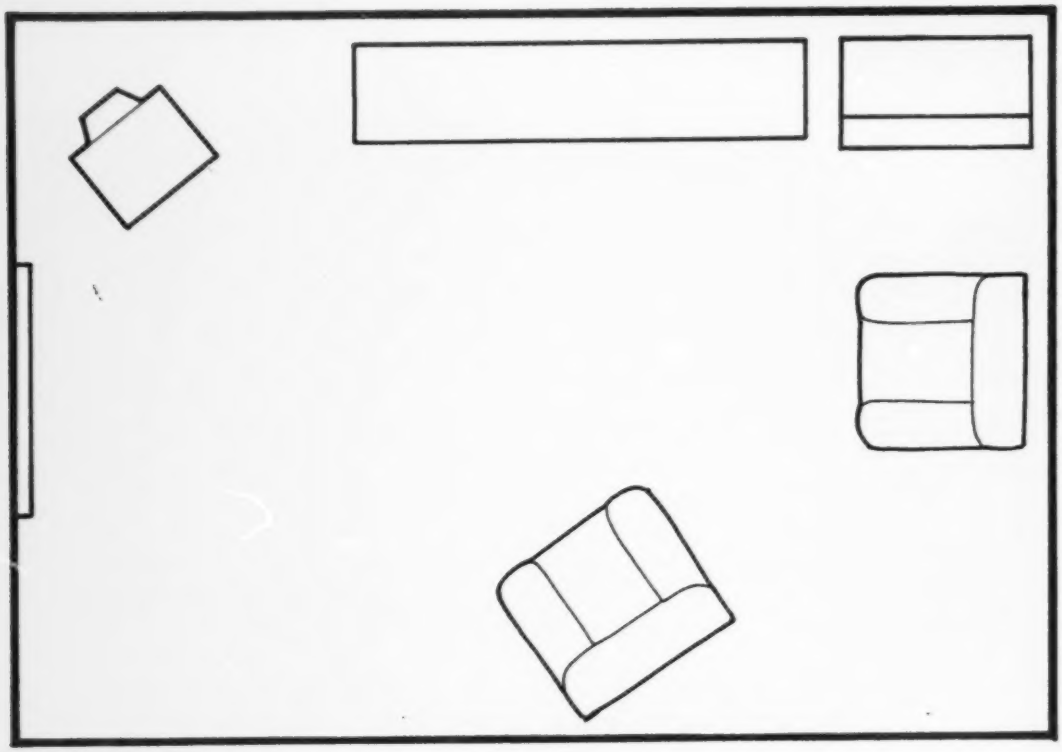


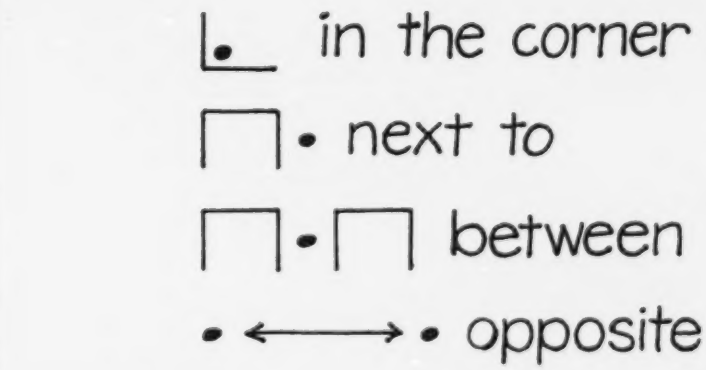


Worksheet 1

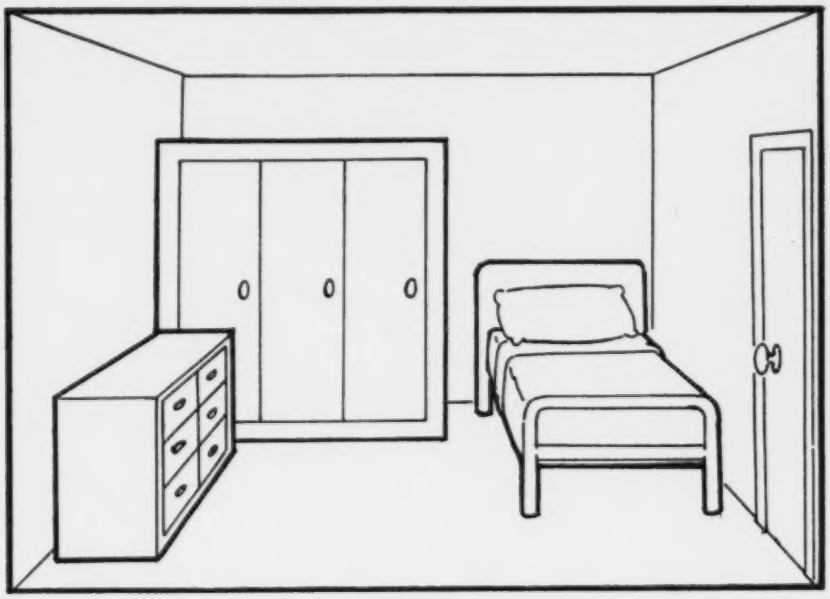
This is Jenny's living room.
In her living room she's got a television, a bookcase, a cupboard and two chairs.

The television is in the _____ on the _____.
The cupboard is in the _____ on the _____.
The bookcase is _____ the television and the cupboard.
One chair is _____ the door and _____ the cupboard.
The other chair is _____ the bookcase.

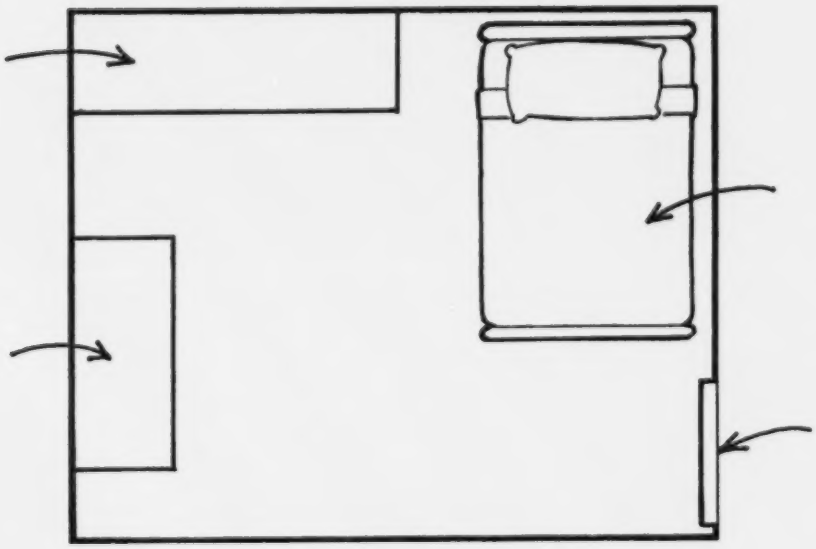
left right



Worksheet 2

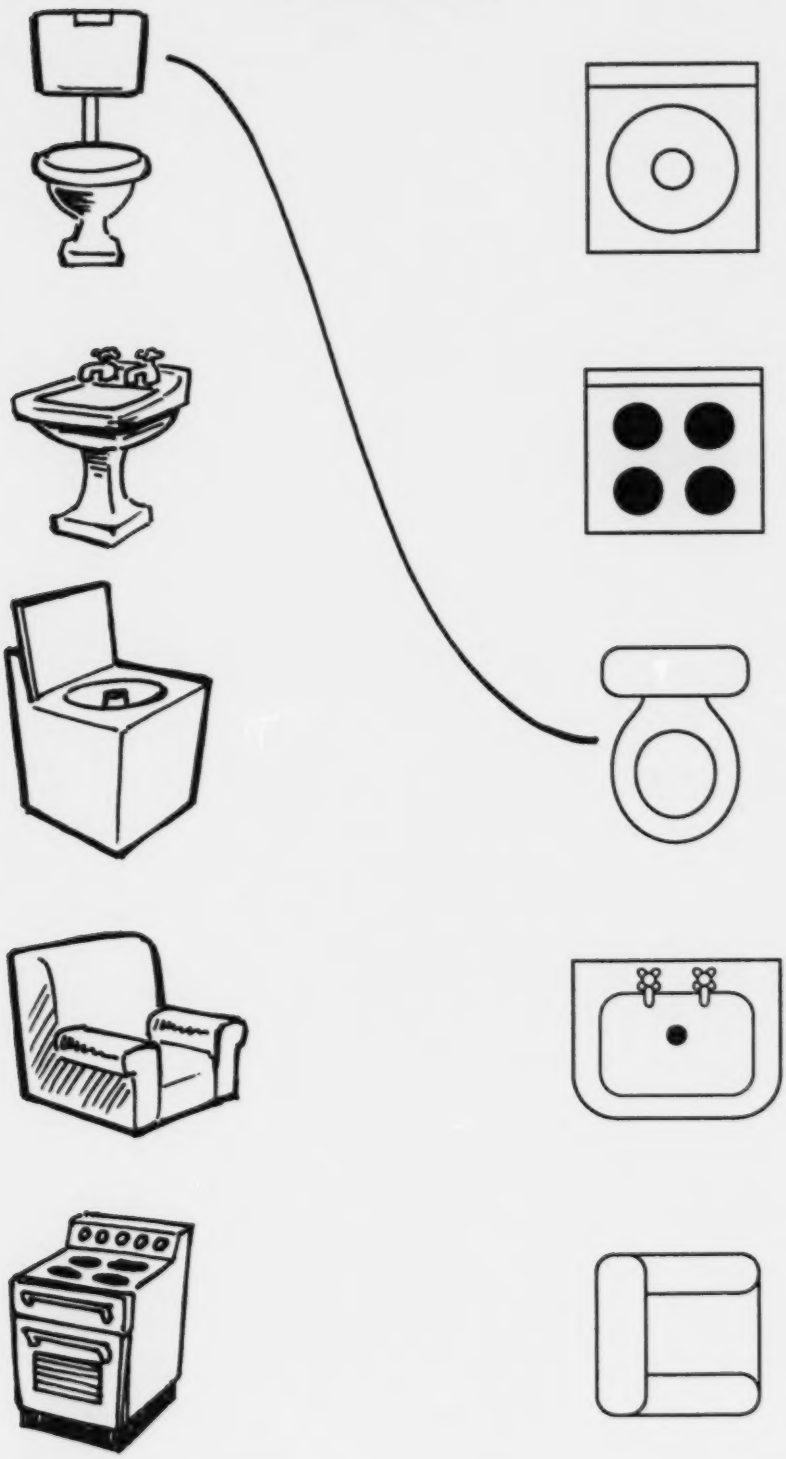


In Jenny's bedroom she's got
a bed,
a cupboard
and a chest of drawers.
Where are they?

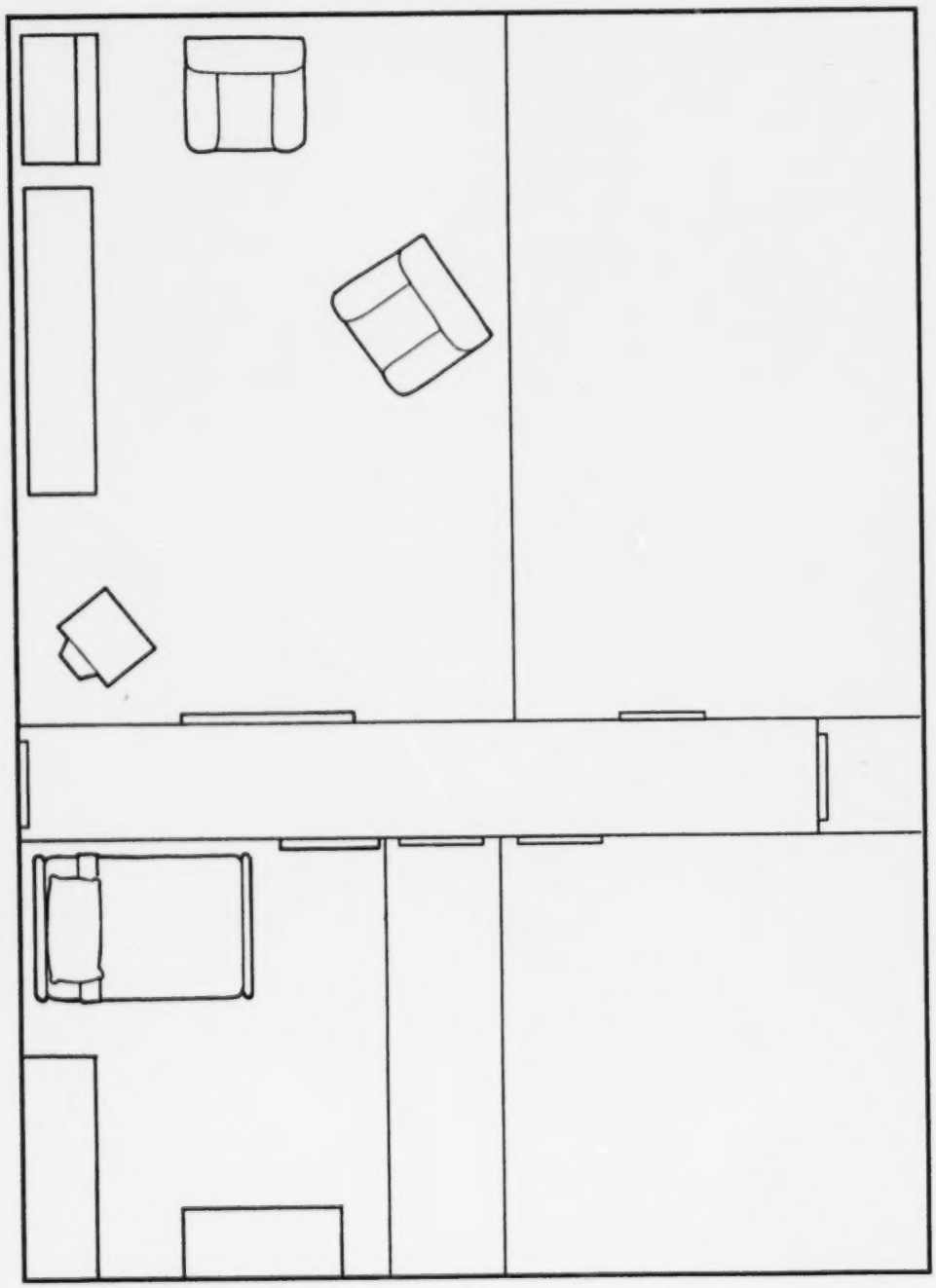


Worksheet 3

What's this?



Worksheet 4



This is Jenny's flat

Worksheet 5

3

CATERING FOR BEGINNER ESL LEARNERS IN MIXED-ABILITY CLASSES

Margaret Huntington

If our non-literate students are to participate more fully in both training and general community activities, the skills necessary for successful participation in our literate world need to be developed slowly and methodically. The activities and strategies presented here are designed to develop basic reading, writing and learning skills in learners with no formal educational background. However, as many teachers may have just a few such students in their low-level classes, the suggestions are supplemented by activities for students who are fully literate in their first language. The materials and methodology outlined in this chapter aim to demonstrate how mixed-ability learners can work side by side in general classes. The chapter is divided into the following sections:

- Alphabet recognition activities (LEB).
- Topic: The Family
  - LEB activities
  - extension activities.
- Topic: Forms
  - LEB activities
  - extension activities.
- Topic: Signs
  - LEB activities
  - extension activities.
- Picture story activities.

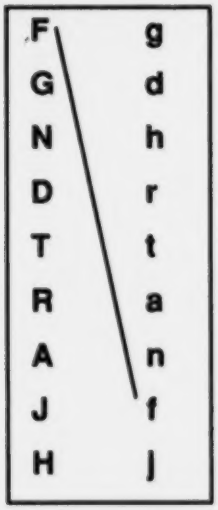
Alphabet recognition activities

These activities aim to build up alphabet recognition skills and familiarise students with techniques for recycling previously presented material. The objective is to have the technique become so familiar that it doesn't interfere with what is to be learned. The activities are not designed to be used one after the other, but can be used again and again:

- for recycling. Low educational background (LEB) learners need to have vocabulary and concepts constantly reviewed.
- for recycling the language in many different learning situations
- for a change of pace after a period of intense concentration or when concentration wanes
- after a more challenging activity or the introduction of new, unfamiliar material. After such occasions it is reassuring for the learner to go back to something already familiar.
- when other students are involved in other activities
- when there are only a few minutes left in the lesson and it is not appropriate to start something new.

Matching upper and lower case letters

Students in pairs, groups or individually match flashcards of upper and lower case letters. When appropriate this can be done competitively to increase the speed of recognition. This can be supplemented with worksheets to be done either in class or at home.



Similar activities can be done with:

- days of the week — MON - Monday
- months of the year — JAN - January

Concentration

Students in groups or pairs take turns to turn over cards of upper and lower case letters to form pairs. The student with the most pairs is the winner. Start with half the alphabet and encourage students to say the letters and display them openly as they turn them over.

Matching pictures and words is a variation on this activity.

For example, fruit and vegetable; grocery items; colours; or weather conditions .

Sequencing letters

Letters of the alphabet are written on separate cards.

Students put randomly distributed letters in order as they listen to a tape. This can be a class, group or pair activity. A similar activity can be done using days of the week, months of the year, class 'photo stories', action sequences or picture stories.

Memory game

Place a number of letters on a tray. After students have had time to study them, cover, remove one and ask students to identify the one removed. Alternatively students could write down what they remember using written models visible around the room.

Any vocabulary can be used for this activity.

For example, personal identification terms; household objects; chemist items.

Snap game

Student A has a pile of upper case letter cards and student B has a pile of lower case letter cards — they are placed side by side. The students take it in turns to turn over a card and when two cards match, the first student to say 'snap' and place a hand over the cards takes that pair. The student with the most pairs is the winner. The same game can be played using digital and analog clocks, or ordinal and written numbers.

Bingo

Have you got a _____?

This is a card game where students are dealt between five and seven cards with the remainder turned down in a pile in the centre. Student A asks student B 'Have you got a D/d ?' If so, student A collects the card, if not student A picks up a card from the centre and the next student has a turn. The student collecting the most pairs is the winner.

Start with between nine and twelve letters and include both upper and lower case letters. The game can also be played using vocabulary for parts of the body, numbers, animals, clothing, occupations or basic sight words. Use words and pictures or just pictures.

Give students the opportunity to call out the items and deal with any questions.

Dictation

Students write, tick or circle letters as they hear them. Letters can spell out word.

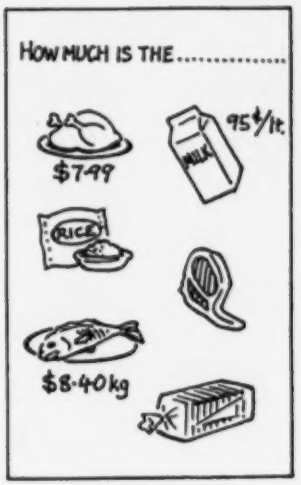
For example, A U S T R A L I A = Australia

S U R N A M E = _____

You can also use telephone numbers; addresses or shopping lists.

Pair work

Student A dictates letters to student B who writes them and vice versa. Similar work can be done using numbers or prices.



Worksheets

The following worksheets provide some useful examples.

a. Circling the same or different letters.

b. Tracing

c. Copying

FIND THE SAME LETTER
CIRCLE IT

O	C	Q	O
B	B	D	P
R	P	B	R
U	V	W	U
P	R	K	P
G	O	G	C
D	B	D	P
W	M	W	N
J	J	D	I

TRACE COPY

K	K	K	K	K	K
Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z
O	O	O	O	O	O
Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q
C	C	C	C	C	C
G	G	G	G	G	G

a b c d e
f g h i j
k l m n o
p q r s t
u v w x y z

Alphabet writing worksheets give recognition and writing practice, as well as reinforcing left to right patterns. The concept of same or different can easily be introduced by demonstrating with cuisenaire rods of same or different lengths.

Using the topic approach to develop literacy skills

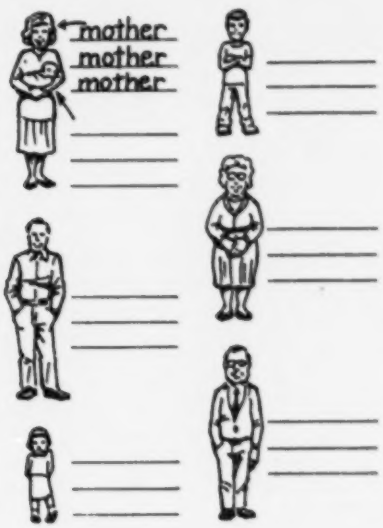
For non-literate LEB learners general oral and written language learning needs to be related directly to their own lives and their own personal experience. Vocabulary items need to be contextualised and meaningful. The following activities centred around the topic of the *family*, and illustrate ways of developing literacy skills through a series of very small steps which can be adapted for other themes or topics. By taking small, sequential learning steps, students have a greater chance of experiencing success and satisfaction. Slowly introduce one small step at a time, allowing the students time to focus fully on one item. When each new step is combined with a review of previously presented items, this provides a solid foundation. Such a procedure also takes into account this type of learner's need for the security and guidance of routine.

Again these steps are not designed to be presented one after the other in the same lesson but introduced over a series of lessons. Some part of each lesson needs to be devoted to recycling previously taught material and providing oral practice. For example, surveys and games provide good practice.

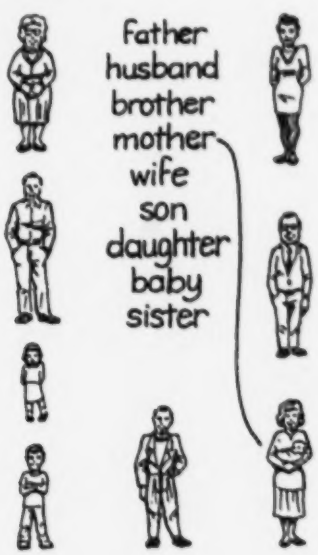
A suggested approach to developing a topic is as follows:

- Enlarge a pictorial representation of a family. Ask students to identify different family members and build up an oral description of family relationships.

- Invite students to add flashcards of written titles to the picture. Be guided by the students as to how many names they want introduced. The cards can be used later for matching activities. Draw the student's attention to initial, middle and final consonant sounds and the schwa sound in 'mother' 'father' 'brother' and 'sister' — relate this discussion to any previously learned vocabulary items. Build on phonetic similarities as the opportunities arise and as the students are ready for it.
- Introduce a series of worksheets for students to write family names on pictures of their own.
- Copy names next to the appropriate picture. Encourage the students to study the word, cover it and write as much as they can before looking at it and covering it again — that is, the look/cover/write strategy. Work with the students to advance from letter-by-letter copying to a few letters at a time (depending on phonic division), and then whole word copying.



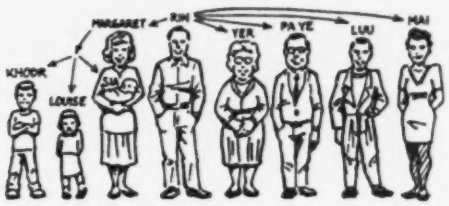
- Match pictures and written word



- Match upper and lower case representations.

MOTHER	husband
BABY	father
SISTER	son
FATHER	mother
HUSBAND	daughter
BROTHER	baby
WIFE	brother
SON	wife
DAUGHTER	sister

- Give their family proper names to reinforce names of relationships as well as class members's names. Model orally first. (The second of these two worksheets would only be given to students who could cope with it.)



Rin is the _____

Margaret is the _____

Sia, Khodr and Louise are the ____

Khodr is the _____

Louise is the _____

Yer is the _____

Pa Ye is the _____

Luu is the _____

Mai is the _____

Rin is Margaret's _____

Yer is Rin's _____

Sia is Margaret's _____

Luu is Rin's _____

Mai is Rin's _____

Khodr and Louise are Rin's _____

Pa Ye is Rin's _____

Yer is Margaret's _____

Louise is Pa Ye's _____

Margaret is Yer's _____

- Circle words as heard. This activity can be done as a class first and then in pairs. (Vary the worksheets by including both upper and lower case letters.)

children	**son**	**daughter**
wife	**sister**	**mother**
husband	**baby**	**father**
	brother	

Family games

- Pairs of students play a game using cut up family pictures and a 9-12 square grid. Student A orders the pictures on a grid and instructs Student B how to order the pictures on his/her grid and then vice versa. This activity is designed to recycle family names, give practice in giving and responding to instructions and asking for clarification.

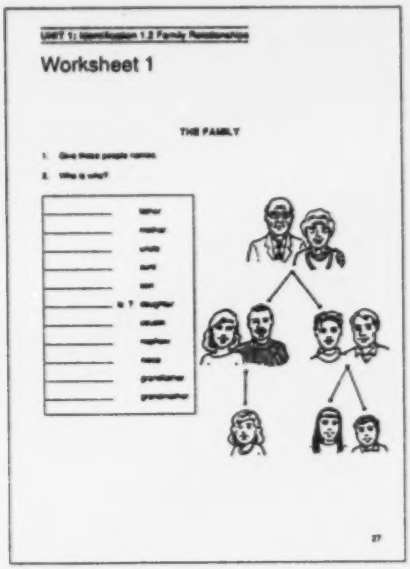
  As with all activities, demonstrate clearly before starting either by playing with a student, instructing and watching two students or by using an overhead projection.

- Put names and pictures on language master cards and make accessible to students in class or in an Independent Learning Centre.
- Play *Concentration* or *Snap* with written cards and pictures.
- Ask students to bring family photos to share and discuss.
- Use cuisenaire rods to describe family members.
- Play *Hang the Butcher*. Students can sequence, write and dictate alphabet on the board first to act as a prompt.
- Play *Pig in the Middle*. Students sit in a circle with one student in the middle. This student has a sheet with labelled pictures, while the rest of the students have either a name on a picture. As the student in the middle calls out a name, the two students with the corresponding name and picture try to swap seats while the student in the middle tries to sit down as well. The student who misses out calls the next name.
- Cut the initial consonants from a number of words and have the students put them together.

Extended activities for literate group

After the initial discussion with the whole class of family relationships these students could be directed to:

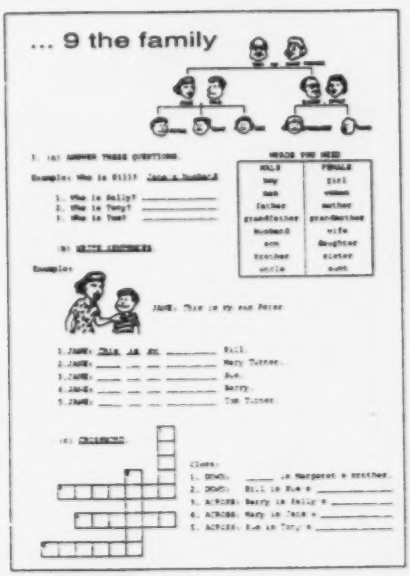
- family tree activities — for example, from *The Priority Course* by Pam Le Good and Janine Haskin.



Worksheet 1

THE FAMILY

Adapted from *Starters: Reading and Writing Worksheets*



... 9 the family

- Draw own family trees and discuss in groups.
- Draw family photos in groups.
- Prepare pen portraits of own families.
- Using photos or magazine pictures, write descriptions of families or fill in prepared cloze exercises.

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Negotiating forms

Along with developing literacy skills to aid general language development, low educational background students will need to be taught the skills to negotiate the sundry forms we need to use in everyday community interaction. The following illustrates ways to introduce the reading of forms such as bank deposit and withdrawal forms.

- Isolate logos and major identifying words and explain or demonstrate their meaning. Hand gestures and miming help reinforce the meaning of withdrawal and deposit.
- Make flashcards of major words and corresponding information.

Account Identification Number	3123 106475

Use these for matching activities.

- Ask students to cut our major words from the form and stick them next to the written words on a worksheet, to build up recognition skills.

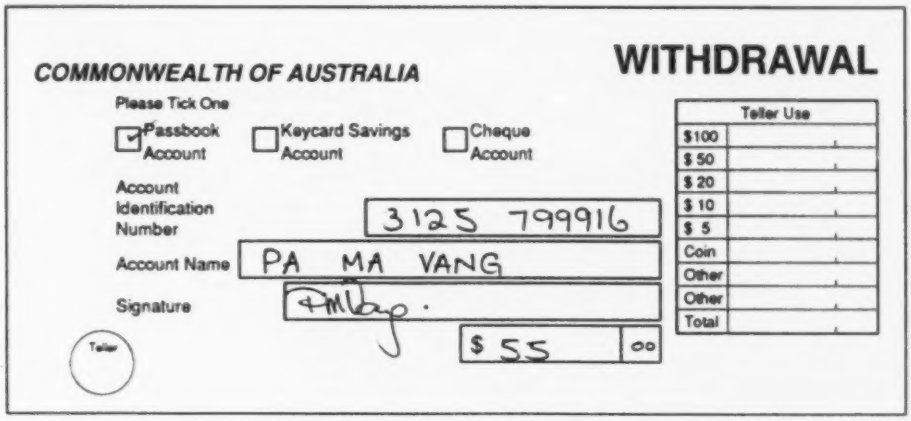
Commonwealth Bank	COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
Withdrawal	WITHDRAWAL
Passbook Account	Passbook Account
Account Number	Account Identification Number
Account Name	Account Name
Signature	Signature
Please Tick One ☐	Please Tick One ☐ Passbook Account

- Prepare a worksheet for matching major words and appropriate responses.

Going to the bank

Take money out	Account Name
Put money in	Passbook Account
	Withdrawal
3123 100064	Deposit
Sia Yang	Account Identification Number
Sia Yang	Signature
☐ Passbook Acount	Please tick one

- Prepare graded sequential worksheets giving students practice in filling in such forms.



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

WITHDRAWAL

Please Tick One

☑ Passbook Account ☐ Keycard Savings Account ☐ Cheque Account

Account Identification Number: 3125 799916

Account Name: PA MA VANG

Signature: PMVang.

$ 55 00

Teller

Teller Use	
$100	,
$ 50	,
$ 20	,
$ 10	,
$ 5	,
Coin	,
Other	,
Other	,
Total	,

What is the account name? _____

What is the account number? _____

How much money? _____

Fill in a withdrawal slip for these people:

(a) Account Number 3125 710538
Account Name Sia Vang
$207.00

(b) Account Number 4213 101698
Account Name Nhia Vang
$17.50

(c) Account Number 3172 541276
Account Name Pa Ma Vang
$150.50

(d) Account Number 3123 751234
Account Name Pa Yang
$83.00

(e) Account Number 3125 896713
Account Name Blia Her
$257.00

Fill out forms :

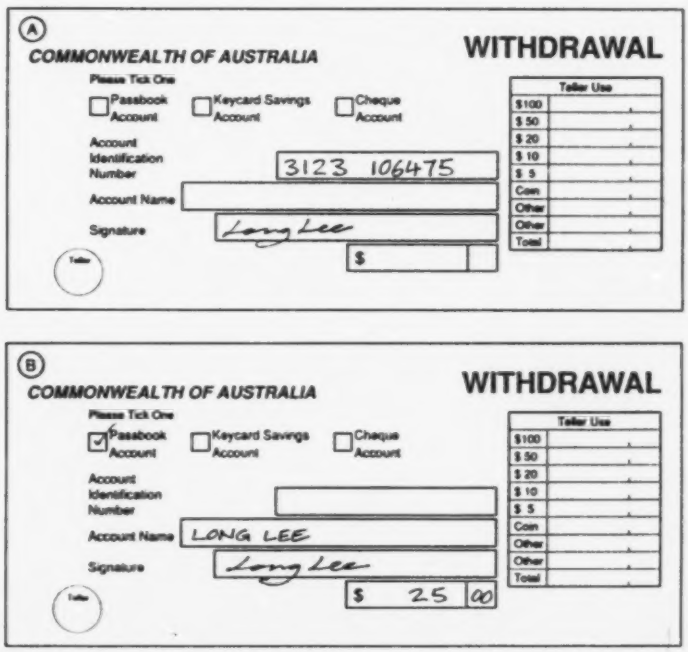
(a) Mai Lee has a passbook account at the Commonwealth Bank. She wants to withdraw $50.00. The account name is Mai Lee and the account number is 3125 7211.

(b) Lee Moua has a passbook account at the Commonwealth Bank. He wants to deposit $25.50. The Account name is Lee Moua and Chee Xiong and the account number is 3125 7015.

(c) Lee Yang has a passbook account at the Commonwealth Bank. He wants to withdraw $120.00. The account name is Lee Yang and the account number is 3125-884.

(d) Sia Yang has a passbook account at the Commonwealth Bank. She wanted to deposit $500.00. The account name is Sia Yang and the account number is 3125- 8192.

- Circle words on the forms as they are heard. Extend from class to pair activity.
- Pairs of students work with partially filled in bank forms. Students question each other in order to fill in the rest of the form.



Informal learners generally have difficulty transferring skills from one context to another, so opportunities should be provided in the classroom for students to practise using the same skills in different situations.

Additional practice in responding to information on forms can be given by looking at bills — for example, SEC bills. Through sustained exposure to such things as bills and concentration on the most relevant words and phrases — for example, 'amount due', 'due date' and 'methods of payment' — students become familiar with the format and less intimidated by the printed word. They learn that it is not necessary to understand every work and they gradually move away from relying on other family members to deal with the more familiar bills. Depending on the needs of the students, other forms to consider are Telecom, Gas and Fuel and Australia Post forms.

Extended activities for literate group

- Use the Banking Kit from *Social Sight Reading Kit* by Micky Rista.
    - — Heading and matching activities with tape.
    - — *Banking Game*. You will need to adapt this as necessary.
- Present real life tasks, such as finding out how to send money overseas.
- Give students form-filling exercises using a variety of common forms. Use partially filled in forms for pair work activities.
- Use activities from Unit 28. 'An Interesting Discussion' in *Using the System* by Chris Corbel.
- Also look at Unit 5 of *Reading in Context: Developing the reading strategies of adult ESL learners*, by D Brosnan, K Brown and S Hood.

Negotiating common signs in the community

Successful, purposeful and safe movement within our community is dependent upon an understanding of common signs and logos and a level of map reading skills. A step-by-step approach can facilitate the attainment of the necessary skills and concepts.

A suggested approach is :

- Begin by discussing signs in the immediate environment and making sense of them.
- Prepare a worksheet of signs and logos in the local vicinity and on a walk around the area.
- Ask students to tick, on the worksheet, the signs they see and write down the street names they encounter. See Sample Worksheet - page 54.

- Review the meaning of the signs and logos once back in the classroom.
- On a floor-map made from butcher's paper walk out the route taken and ask students to place signs, logos and sheet names in the appropriate places.
- Draw up a similar map on A4 paper and ask students to stick signs, logos and street names on their own copy.
- Play a board game with dice and counters. As students land on a sign or logo, they have to identify it and say where they have seen it.

Extended activities for literate groups

- Use the general signs from *Social Sight Reading Kit.*
  - reading and matching activities with tape
    - crossword
    - *Signs Game* — You may need to modify this.
- Ideas and worksheets from *Vital Signs* by Margaret Brownie

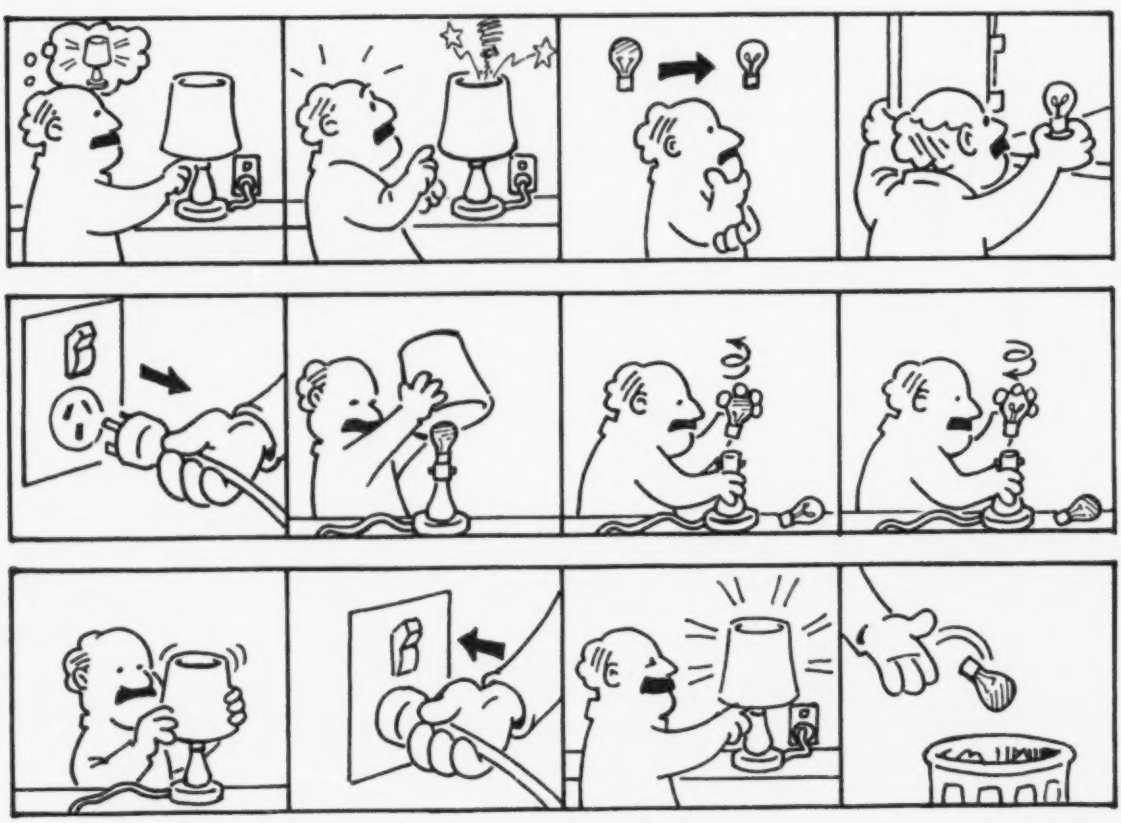
- Directions activity –while listening to instructions from a tape, students trace a route on a map.
- Street directory activities –in pairs, students locate partner's street, finding the nearest public hospital, Infant Welfare Centre and so on.
- Role play activities – asking for and giving directions.
- Matching activities – use road safety and workplace safety warnings and pictures.

(The Priority Course, Unit 7, Pages 151-142. Use the examples most relevant to the student lives.)

Picture story activities

As informal learners learn from personal, situational experience, every learning activity should be as realistic and immediate as possible. Excursions are valuable for this reason and photos taken on the excursion can help recreate the experience, back in the classroom. Mime and picture stories can also provide a valuable stimulus for oral and written activities in the classroom.

The picture story below can be used to introduce, recycle or extend the language of instruction used in the classroom and elsewhere.



Suggested steps :

1. Mime the action sequence using a lamp.
2. Elicit language from the students and build up the story sequence orally.
3. Students, as a group, instruct a volunteer student in how to change a light bulb. Repeat as often as necessary and in different lessons, before going on to the next steps. During these, the two groups, low education non-literate students and higher education literate students would work separately.

Low-level students

- Sequence cut-up strips or pictures in a group or individually.
- Practise language orally, in pairs.
- Identify simple written sentences and pictures as heard on tape or language master.
- Copy the sentences under the pictures. Check them with the tape.
- Sequence story sentences without pictures.
- Do a simple cloze exercise with the tape.

Higher-level students

- Sequence the cut-up pictures individually
- Practise language orally in pairs.
- Either match sentence and pictures, or write sentences to go with the pictures.
- Self correction, in groups or pairs.
- Identify use of imperative verbs.
- Using this as a model, write up another set of instructions for example, putting up a towel rack.

Students with no formal educational background can easily become discouraged in a class of mixed educational background learners, as they compare themselves unfavourably with students who can read and write. However, any sensitivity to doing different work can soon dissipate as the student's particular needs are being met and they begin to succeed through a particular learning experience.

References

Beaverson, A. and Cartensen, C. *Starters:Reading & Writing Worksheets.* NCRC 1985.

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Brownie, M. Vital Signs: *Real life reading skills.* Martin Educational 1986.

Corbel, C. *Using the System: Beginning Australian English.* AE Press 1985.

Courtenay, M., Macpherson, M. and Riley, P. *Framework 1: An Australian Course in English for New arrivals.* Longman Cheshire 1984.

Le Good, P. and Haskin, J. *The Priority Course.* AMES Victoria 1984.

Rista, M. *Social Sight Reading Kit for learners at lower levels of reading and writing proficiency.* AMES NSW 1982.

4

PREPARING A UNIT OF WORK

Jenny Green

It is the third week of the course for a low-level adult ESL class. Students are grouped around tables in twos, threes or fours. A closer look reveals that there is a variety of activity in the room. One group is matching cards on which suburban names are written in lower case and upper case letters. Another group is playing a game of *Concentration* with similar cards; later they will place the words in alphabetical order. Yet another group is working on an enlarged Met map which illustrates the suburban rail routes around Melbourne. Students are working together on a worksheet with questions such as:

'Which line is the Footscray train on?' 'What is the first station on the Upfield line?' 'Which station is before Ascot Vale?'.

These groups are the extremes of the class in which there is a range of previous educational experience. Faced with the prospect of planning a course for such a group, the teacher created a unit of work which would not only encompass the range of language elements required by the students, but would meet the needs of students who would inevitably learn at differing speeds as the course progressed. This chapter describes the planning, preparation and presentation of such a unit of work. It covers:

- choosing a topic that can be expanded into a unit of work
- compiling a list of language elements the students need to know
- how to include those elements in meaningful texts and contexts
- identifying spoken and written texts within those contexts
- careful analysis of each text before it is taught
- developing a methodological approach to teaching texts.

Planning a unit of work

What students need to know

In the initial planning of the unit of work, teachers should consider the elements that students need to learn and/or recycle within the unit.

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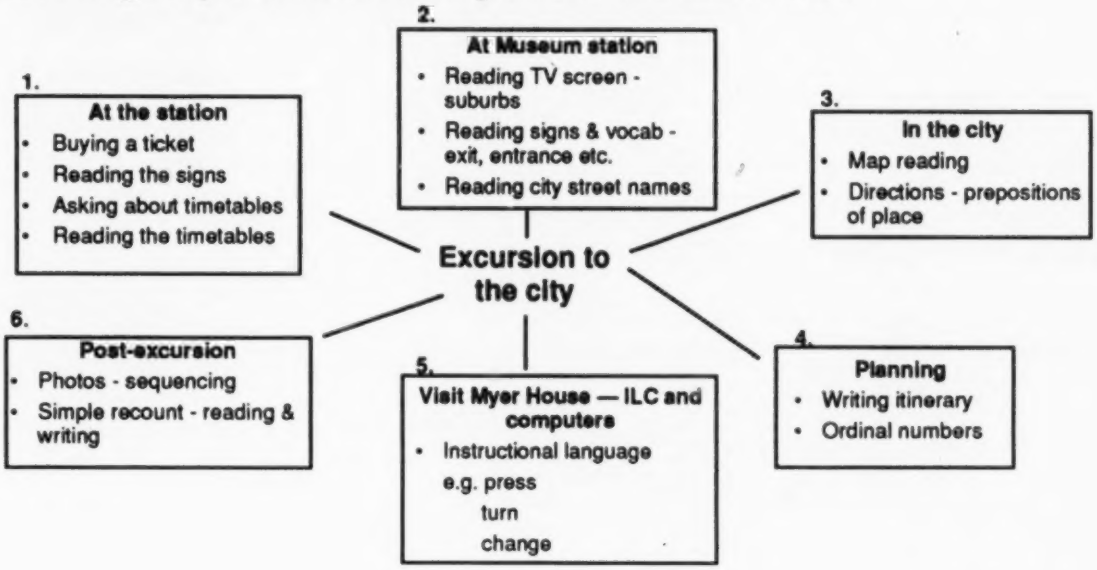
For example,

- numbers
- alphabet
- money
- days of the week
- dates
- time
- local orientation
- using public transport
- personal identification

This list may be altered as the course progresses and students' needs become more apparent.

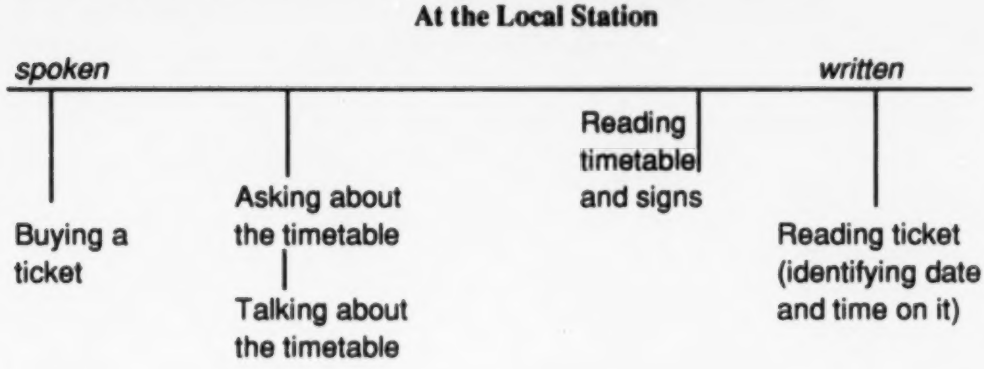
Choosing a topic which can be expanded into a unit of work



The topic chosen here is an excursion to the city and the diagram illustrates relevant contexts which could be explored. It also illustrates the spoken and written texts in each context that are within the reach of the students.

At this stage a brainstorming of ideas is appropriate. It is likely that some texts may be omitted, or others added as the course progresses. This stage is vital, however, as it provides the teacher with an overall plan to refer to and ensures that s/he does not lose sight of connections that can be made to the outside world and to students' lives.

Identifying the spoken and written texts within each context



Once the contexts of the excursion and the language texts within each of those contexts are identified, it is important to distinguish between the spoken and the written texts. An example of this process is shown above. At the local station, students will be required to buy a ticket, they may have to enquire about the timetable, and they may have to read timetables and signs.

In the planning stage, it is appropriate that teachers spend time considering the texts that will be taught and analysing them for the essential elements and the optional elements. The choices that could be made by a teacher before the text is presented to students are shown below.

Analysing each text before it is taught

Passenger	Ticket Seller	
2 hours to the city please	$2.10	
		Essential elements or stages
Thanks		
	Next	

Some optional elements which could be used for later extensions to the text can be seen in the graphic below.

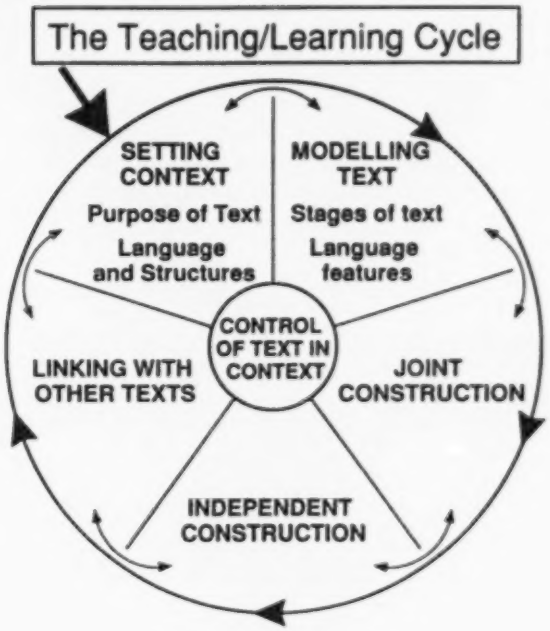
Passenger	Ticket Seller
• Zone one please	All day or two hours?
• All day please	That'll be $2.10
• Two hours please	Here's your change
How much to the City, please?	
Pardon?	
Concession please	Have you got your Health Care Card?

• Optional elements

Local variations will influence choice of vocabulary and phrases and there is no one correct way to begin. It is helpful however for teachers to clarify those elements for themselves before teaching. A visit to the local station is useful. It may reveal that the station is often unstaffed and that many tickets are purchased without any language exchange.

This planning that takes place prior to the course becomes a useful reference as the course progresses. Also intrinsic to this preparatory work is the notion that the starting point for learning a language is neither the vocabulary item nor the grammatical structure. Rather, the starting point is the text, which is always within a context and which needs to have a clear meaning to the student so that the student learns from it. The language and structures are learned in relation to a text in context. Vocabulary and structures may be extracted from a text for detailed drilling and practice, but they are always taken back to the context for practice and for verification and clarification of meaning.

Teaching the unit of work



This teaching/learning cycle is a useful framework for the teaching of texts in the classroom. The cycle may take less than one lesson to complete, or it may take a series of lessons, depending on the difficulty of the content.

It is helpful if the teacher starts by establishing the context of the text and its purpose within that context. If we consider the oral text of buying a rail ticket, it is probably sufficient to show students a range of Met tickets and ensure that they understand the words *tram, train, bus* and *station* by showing photos or sketches of these. A brief visit to the local station — perhaps incorporated into a walk around the neighbourhood — could be effective. A photograph of the ticket box at the station can then be used as a reference in the classroom. At the same time, photographs of the timetable and of the station sign can be taken for use later.

Once the teacher is confident that the students are clear about the context and the purpose of the text, s/he can prepare to model the text in the classroom. In the planning stage, it is suggested that the teacher

analyse each text before it is taught. We can pursue the text example already given, that of the oral text of buying a ticket, and take it around the teaching/learning cycle. In the classroom, the teacher can use a few props to recreate the ticket box at the station — a table, a sign, a few tickets and some coins are all that is necessary. The teacher then models the basic spoken text by physically taking the part of, first the ticket seller and then the passenger. Because the text is not merely a group of linked structures, but rather "an interactive event, a social exchange of meanings", (Halliday and Hasan, 1985 :11) modelling the text requires the handing over of the ticket and of the money.

Modelling may need any number of repetitions before one or more students will volunteer to take part in the interaction. At this stage the primary concern is to ensure that the students understand the stages of the text and that they are understanding meanings, rather than repeating perfect structures. That will come later.

At the stage when students begin to take part, the joint construction stage, the teacher can note any language features or pronunciation that need reteaching. For this particular text, students need to know cardinal numbers and the vocabulary of money and time.

The independent construction stage, when students are practising the text in pairs or small groups, is an important stage. Then, the teacher can move around the room and assist in particular difficulties and note any students who are adding new elements to the text. Students who are familiar with the situation will add 'concession please' or 'zone one please' very easily. The teacher needs to be alert to such extending of the text and be ready to return to the modelling stage and include new elements as appropriate.

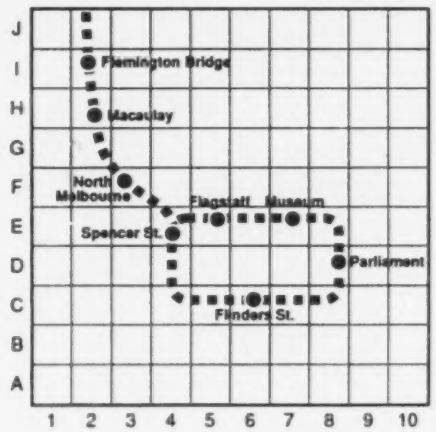
The grammatical features of even such a simple text can be exploited to the full. For example, the use of the definite article can be taught. We say, 'to the city' and not 'to a city'. We say 'to Flemington' and not 'to the Flemington'. This may be knowledge that students have unconsciously acquired and we can make this understanding conscious and extend it through exercises and examples.

If students and/or teachers decide to extend the text to include the notion of, for example, zones, it would be useful for the students to become familiar with the Met Rail map which indicates the position of each of the metropolitan zones through colour coding. We cannot assume that all our students will have map reading skills (see Achren in this publication) and teachers need to be aware of those students with limited formal education in these activities.

Large Met Rail maps can be obtained from Met outlets. All suburban stations are listed in alphabetical order under the map with a grid reference beside them. This map is another text, this time a written text, also relevant to the context of the local station. Teachers can again use the teaching/learning cycle as a framework for teaching the text. For example, to:

- show students the purpose of the text and where it is used
- look at the essential elements of the text such as
  - suburban station names in relation to each other and the city
  - zones in concentric circles
  - rail lines named after the station at the end of the line
  - grid reference symbols at the sides of the map.

A simple overhead transparency to model this map, starting perhaps with a railway line familiar to the students, is a teacher-centred and teacher-directed stage.



A worksheet could follow this modelling. For example, students have to work together, and eventually independently, to given the grid references of the following suburban stations:

North Melbourne	F 3
Flemington Bridge	____
Spencer Street	____
Parliament	____

Students may need to come to use the entire Met map gradually or they may be able to use it easily — a difference which usually depends on their level of formal schooling.

The written text of the train timetable as shown at local stations also involves using the skill of grid referencing.

This text can also be simplified and put on to an overhead transparency to illustrate to students the layout and structure of the text. Again, teachers need to be conscious that students with low levels of formal education will not necessarily comprehend the text, its format and its purpose.

As with the teaching of all the texts, the teacher needs to analyse the text before modelling it and to identify its linguistic features. In order to use the timetable, students need to know the digital form of time, the symbols 'am' and 'pm', the phrases 'to the City' and 'from the City' and time vocabulary such as, 'week days' and 'weekend'.

Once the text has been modelled, students can complete exercises and worksheets, first together and then independently. There may be a simple listening exercise — for example, students have to circle the time they hear the teacher saying. There may be pair work — student A has information missing on his timetable and student B can supply the information from her timetable.

Other written texts

These two texts may be appropriate for some of the students in the class, as the unit of work progresses. Using other written texts as extensions is particularly useful where there are mixed levels of literacy.

16 July 1993

Dear _____ ,

Next Tuesday we are going to the city.

We will be away from 9.00 am until 12.30 pm. We will take photos and show you next week.

Regards,

_____

A letter to another class telling them about the excursion.

30 July 1993

Dear _____ ,

Last Tuesday we went to the city. We took some photos. Please come and look at them at coffee time tomorrow.

Regards,

_____

A follow-up letter of invitation.

The posters illustrated below are also useful written texts whose meaning will be apparent to students as the unit progresses.

Poster I	Poster II
Excursion	Excursion
Who?	Date _____
When?	Destination _____
Where to:	Departure Time _____
What time?	Returning Time _____
How much?	Cost _____
	Transport _____

Examples of worksheets to extend these written texts or to link them with other texts are:

- transferring written information from Poster I to Poster II
- listening to an oral text about plans for the excursion and completing the written information on a poster
- filling in the gaps in the information. This is a pair activity in which student A has information and responds to student B's questions.

Teachers all have teaching strategies and methods with which they feel comfortable and enjoy. The purpose of this article is not to encourage teachers to discard any such familiar strategies. Rather, it is to present a practical as well as methodological framework for planning a unit of work — a framework which is useful for the teaching of all texts.

Teachers who enjoy jazz chants, for example, may want to make up appropriate verses around the topic. For example,

- When does the next train go to the city?

I don't know.

I don't know.

- When does the next train go to the city?

Mm . . . . I know

Mm . . . . I know

5 past 10

5 past 10.

- Thanks very much.

That's OK.

The rhythm and intonation of words and phrases can be reinforced in short chants. For example,

Flemington,
Kensington,
Ascot Vale,
and Upfield.

North Melbourne,
St. Albans,
St. Kilda,
and Werribee.

Sunshine,
Footscray,
Werribee,
and Upfield.

King Street,
Queen Street,
Burke Street,
and Swanston Street.

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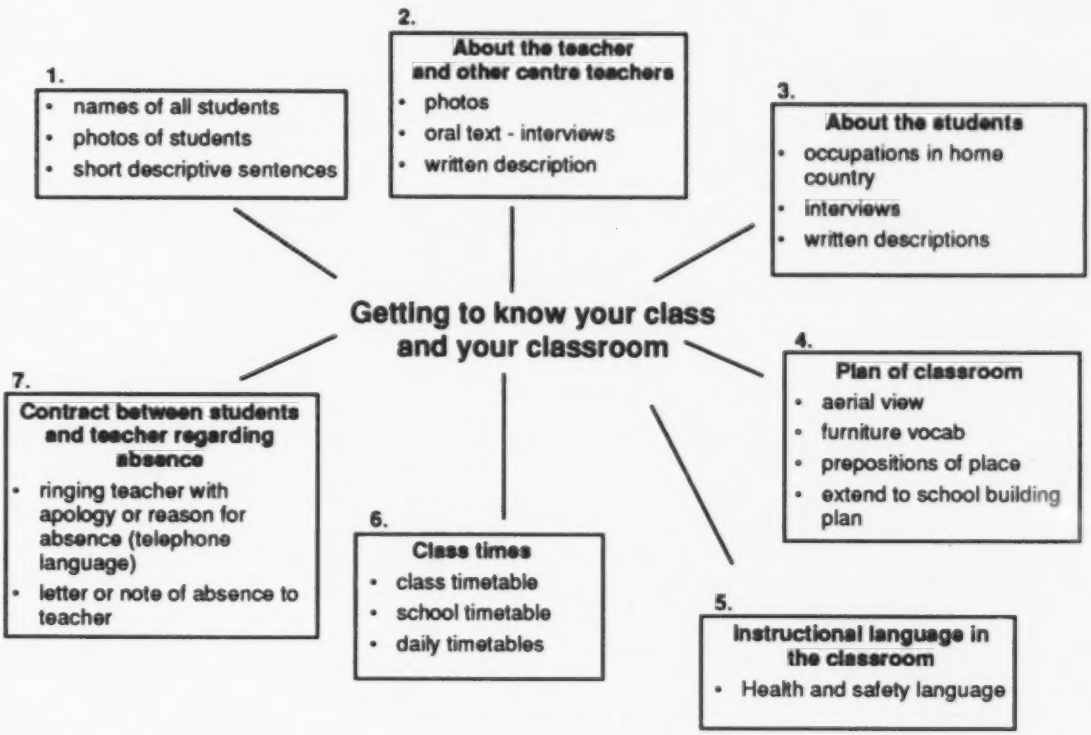
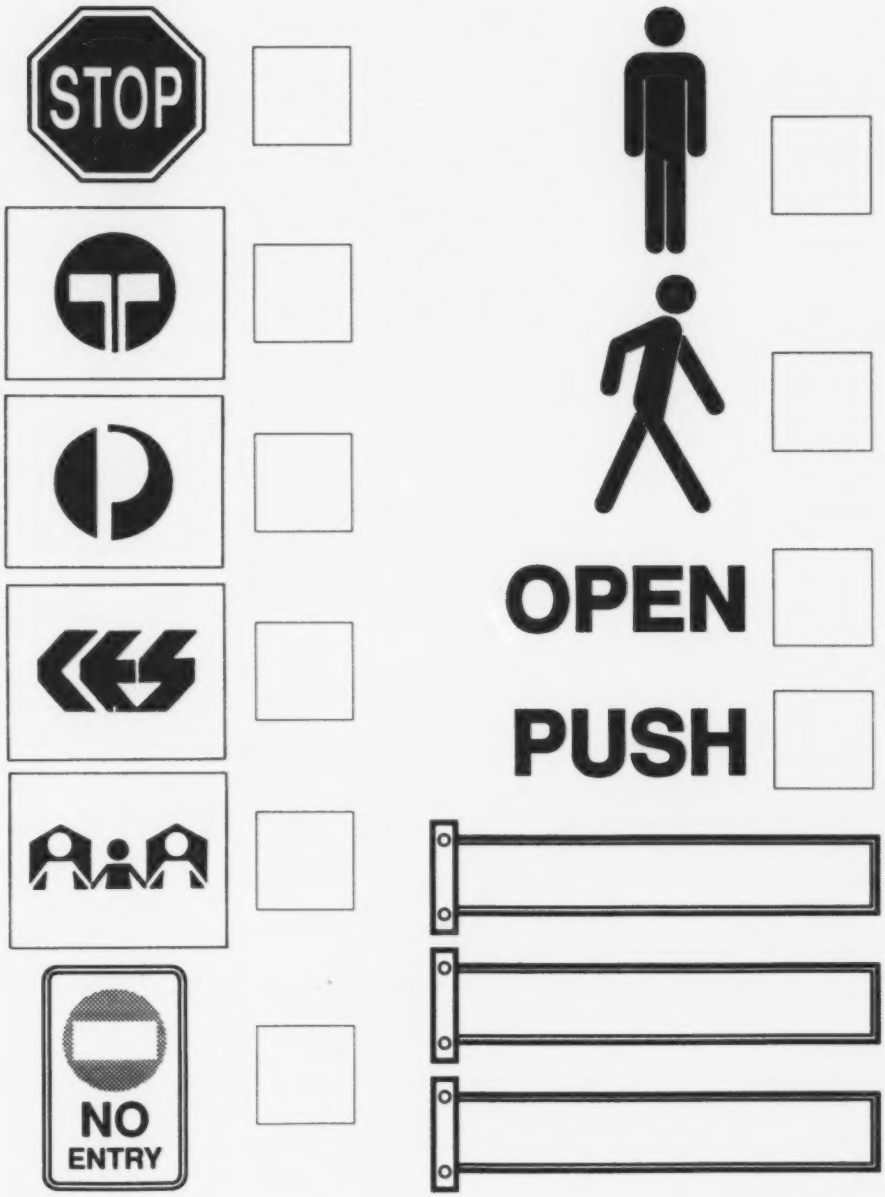
Example of other appropriate classroom topics

The topic of an Excursion to the City was used here as an example, to illustrate a framework for planning units of work in the low-level classroom.

Brainstorming the topic below, which is appropriate to a beginner or low-level group of students might produce the following framework from which a unit of work could be developed.



The most useful examples will be drawn from contexts familiar to the students. Teachers can use their knowledge of the local area and of their students' needs to create appropriate courses.


STOP
OPEN
PUSH
NO
ENTRY

5

RECYCLING ACTIVITIES

Liliana Hajncl

This chapter reproduces the final report on the LEB learners project carried out at Footscray AMEC in Term 3 1989.

Introduction

Frameworks - New Arrivals: Initial to Elementary Proficiency says ". . . the overall aim is to help students carry out real-life tasks by means of language, so . . . a rich variety of contexts, materials and focuses and activity is necessary because learners need time to process language, and what is taught in each lesson will not necessarily be learnt, or remembered if only presented once." (p.17)

A variety of tasks that recycle learnt language allows students the chance to recall, practise and use this language in different situations, and so also helps them to see patterns of language.

Students may be resistant to some of the activities, as they do not fit in to their expectations of what schooling should be. Teachers need to be sensitive to this. Prior explanation of the aim of the activity, or post-activity evaluation can be very useful, especially if there is bilingual assistance available.

Low education background students may not have been exposed to many of the skills involved in educational games and activities that people who have been through the Australian school system learnt at a very early age, so analyse and evaluate carefully the level of abstraction and the steps and processes involved in each activity. ("What does the learner need to know or to be able to do to successfully complete this activity?" - aerial view, role play, maze or map reading ....).

If you're teaching a game, or introducing an activity (eg. taking a survey, performing a role play) demonstrate it thoroughly from beginning to end, or for a longer task, demonstrate each step or stage to completion.

For a game, play a demonstration round with a student(s) (choose students who are confident and who enjoy being 'on display'). Physically draw the other class members around you to watch, and include them in the game, eg: by showing them your hand in a card game, or by seeking their advice on your next move in a concentration game ("which card had the house on it? I can't remember."). Play to the end, exaggerating your delight or despair, repeating each utterance and involving the whole class. When the round is finished, check to see if all have understood.

When students are engaged in playing the game or completing the activity, monitor each student, pair or group to ensure they have grasped the rules or structure. Sometimes you may have to make up a pair or a playing group yourself, in which case be sure to switch groups for the second, third, ... round.

Here are some tasks and activities that can help diversify the recycling of learnt language. This list of activities was compiled with the help of Elizabeth Cox, Joanne Goodman, Gwenda Preston, Carlos Da Silva and Joan Singer.

- ***Start each lesson with the date, weather and a daily news story***, that can build in previously learnt language items. eg : What's the News? - Xuan has a hair cut.
  - Marta is sick today.
  - Tomorrow is the first day of Spring.
  - Tjin has a job interview this afternoon.
- ***Organise a real-life activity*** that employs learnt language eg:
  - Morning tea for introductions, offering, accepting, refusing, ...Invite the Principal, DPO, ...
  - Shopping excursion
  - Cake making or preparing a meal in the classroom
  - Information seeking from one of the local services: at the local station, students can enquire about interstate or country tickets, times of trains, cost and duration of trips, or can obtain Met maps, local timetables, etc.

Listening Activities

- ***Story dictation*** - eg. to revise telling the time.

  i) Give each student a sheet of 10-15 blank clock faces.

  ii) Tell the class a story, eg. : "Mr Takis gets up at 7 o'clock. He has a shower and then has breakfast at 7.30, etc." Students draw on and/or write down the time of each activity.

  iii) the next time you do this activity, have a student dictate their own timetable.

  Story dictation can be used to revise dates, years etc. "I was born in 1956. I left school in 1969. I met my husband in 1973. I got married in ....., I had a child ....." or "My husband/My daughter was born ..... He/She ....".

- ***Bingo.*** Commercial number and alphabet bingo games can be bought. If you are making your own, 6-8 letters per card is sufficient; but numbers are a bit trickier. To include numbers 1-100, make cards with 16-20 numbers on and instruct students that they must complete either one vertical or horizontal line only to win.

You can make your own cards for topic vocabulary, but this can be quite time-consuming. You can instead instruct students to chose 4 words from 20 (ie. You might have just brainstormed with the class 'all the words we can remember to do with weather/health/family/a house/shopping containers, etc') and then they can reselect their words for each round.

For pronunciation practice, each winning student can call the next round of the game.

- ***Listening to recorded dialogue, to complete written information-gap exercises*** for eg. Time, date, spelling, age, day of week, street name, etc.
- ***Listening to a recorded dialogue, to identify and list*** in order a number of items that students have on slips of paper (see *The Priority Course* p.99 as an example). Other topics can include items of clothing in 'Packaging for a Holiday', descriptions of health in 'A Letter Home', rooms or items of furniture in a flat or house in 'Renting a [furnished] Flat'.

- ***Picture Dictation*** - eg. To revise prepositions and present continuous
  - i) Each student has a blank sheet of paper.
  - ii) The teacher dictates a picture. The students draw what the teacher says. eg: "A man is walking down a street." The students draw a man/a street. "On his left is a big tree. A dog is sitting under the tree . . ."
  - iii) Students compare their pictures and describe to each other what they have drawn to explain any discrepancies.

A variation on this is a colouring-in activity that has been very successful in several classes, much to my surprise.

- i) Each student has a sheet with several items drawn on it, and a set of 12 fine line texta pens. (You could use a vocabulary copy master of tools or buildings or geometrical shapes ...., a favourite is p. 111 of *Lifelines: Teacher's Book*, to revise items of clothing, colours and comparatives).
- ii) The teacher says a sentence, eg. "The green shirt is bigger than the yellow one." or "The red shoes are longer than the light blue ones." Students select the item and texta, and colour in the two articles.
- iii) After a couple of the teacher's sentences, students can dictate one sentence each to the rest of the class.
- iv) When the colouring-in is complete, students can either write their own sentence on the board, or dictate it to another student who writes it on the board, and the class can then correct any mistakes.

Following Instructions

- ***Using Cuisinaire.***
  - i) Students work in pairs. Student 1 builds a structure using Cuisinaire rods or coloured blocks, hiding his/her work behind a book or a paper.
  - ii) She/He then gives 'building instructions' to student 2. "First put a blue rod on the table. Then put a red rod on the blue one. Next to the red rod put a white rod...."
  - iii) The book is removed, and the students compare their structures, and describe them to each other to explain any discrepancies.

This game can be played with student 1 drawing a series of geometrical shapes on a page, or placing cut-out pictures of fruit/people/shops/household items, etc. on page and then describing where they are placed. "The pear is in the middle. The cucumber is above the pear. The cucumber is between the orange and the pineapple...."

- ***Simon Says . . .***

This can be 'Point to . . .' or 'Touch your. . . ' for parts of the body or it can be following such instructions as 'Stand up. Come to the board. Write you name on the board. . . ', 'Tell Tenh to look right', 'Ask Edward the time.' etc.

- ***Picture Dictation***

Using the drawing of an empty room from page 197 of *Lifelines*, or a set of empty shelves in a 'shop', or doll's house, or a filing cabinet..., the teacher or student instructs the whole class, or one member of it to 'put the chair next to the fireplace' or to 'Put the hammer in the third drawer' or to 'Put the packet of rice between the bottle of soy sauce and the carton of eggs.' etc.

- ***The Weather***

i) Video tape, or tape on a cassette a number and variety of Weather Forecasts (eg. SBS, Ch 10, Ch 2 etc.)

ii) Students select and circle the words they hear from a printed list.

iii) Students write down the expected maximum and minimum temperature for their own, other capital cities.

This activity can be done several times over, as more detailed or complex information can be sought each time; eg. long range forecasts; listening for comparatives - finer, drier, colder, windier ... (than today) and superlatives - hottest, driest, etc; names of country towns which can then be located on a map of Victoria, etc.

Speaking Activities

- ***Find Your Partner***

A) Half the students in the class have questions on slips of paper, and the other half have answers. Students must move around the room asking and answering each other until they meet their partner and match a question and answer.

B) Each student has a shopping list and a random selection of food items (either real packets, etc. or pictures of same on card). Students move around the room asking, "Have your got a kilo of onions/any milk, etc." and replying, "Yes, I have. Here you are." or "No, I haven't. I'm sorry." until they have given away their unmatched items, and gathered those items listed on their shopping lists. There is a nice version of this in Harrap's *Communication Games*, although you will have to change pounds to kilos.

C) Occupations. Prepare pairs of cards - eg:

Builder	I build things
Cleaner	I clean things
Mechanic	I fix things

and pass them out to students so that half the class has an occupation card, and half the class has a job description card. Students circulate, asking, "What do you do?" until they find their partner ("I'm a builder", "I build things"). Then, with their partner they write up as many sentences as they can, along the lines: 'I build offices/houses/schools/factories ...' or 'I fix cars/trucks/aeroplanes/motor bikes ..'.

It is very important in this activity, as in all of them, to give a model and to emphasise that students extend themselves.

Students ask each other, or use their note books or wall posters to recall vocabulary. When they have written all the sentences they can, each pair joins a second pair and tells them, without showing their cards or their sentences, all the things that they do, thus revising pronunciation. The second pair must name the occupation, "You're a builder".

- ***Class Speaking Games***

These are all variations on "20 questions" or "Psychologist". In each game one student leaves the room, and the rest of the class chooses a person or idea or object. When the student returns to the room, she/she must ask the class questions to discover the correct answer.

A) "Where is it?" - for prepositions and drilling 'it is/it isn't'. The class hides an object. The returning students asks, "Is it in/on/under/near, etc....?" Answers are "Yes, it is/No, it isn't."

B) Emotions - for attributive adjectives and drilling 'Are/aren't'. The class chooses an emotion, or adjective such as tall, old, intelligent, slim. The returning student asks, "Are you happy/sad/young, etc.?" Answers are, "Yes, we/No, we aren't".

C) Health - for illnesses and drilling "have/haven't". The class chooses an illness/ailment. The returning student asks," Have you got a sore throat/headache, etc?" Answers are, "Yes, we, have/No, we haven't".

D) Personalities - this game involves more complex language and requires students to know each other quite well. It's a good end-of-course variation. The class decides on which student they will be. The returning student asks, "Are you tall/thin/happy/Vietnamese/married, etc.?" "Have you got any children/ a driver's licence/a brown coat, etc?", "Do you speak Russian/like watching TV, etc?" Answers are, "Yes, I am/have/do". "No, I'm not/I haven't/I don't."

E) Directions - you need a big classroom for this one. Divide it into blocks and streets using the tables. Place building names or objects on the tables. The class directs the returning student to the name or object they have decided on, eg. 'Go right. Cross over the intersection. Go to the end of the street ....". The returning student has to arrive at the correct destination in the shortest number of moves.

- ***Survey***

i) Students move around the room to compile a survey or fill a questionnaire, eg. "Do you like .../Can you .... /Have you ever .... ./What time do you ... /Have you ever broken you leg/been in hospital? ../How many children/brothers/rooms [in your house] do you have?/Do you watch {channel/program} ..? etc."

This can take a long time, especially if you have a big class, so perhaps ask each student to survey five other students only.

ii) Compile the class findings on a wall chart or the board, as this recycles the language yet again, and calls for use of third person responses.

- ***Picture Story Building***

i) Choose a story in picture form (from Heaton - *Composition Through Pictures*, for example). If there are four pictures, divide the class into four groups - A, B, C, D (ie. 2-6 students per group). Give Group A each a copy of one of the pictures, Group B a copy of another of the pictures, etc. until all the pictures are given out, but don't tell the students where their picture comes in the story sequence.

ii) As a group, the students develop a sentence that describes their picture.

iii) The groups reform so that there is one student from Group A, one from Group B, one from C and one from D in each new group. The new ABCD Groups now tell each other their sentences, and then decide on the correct order for the story.

iv) The whole class can discuss the final story form together.

- ***"Where is it?"***

  i) Using, for example, the pictures and prepositional phrases from page 46 of *Contact English : Student's Book*, make up pairs of envelopes, one with pictures, the other with the phrases.

  ii) Working in pairs, student 1 asks, "Where is the pen? Is it in the box?" or " Is the pen in the box?" Student 2 answers either, "Yes it is." or "No it isn't". When the picture matches the phrase and the answer is affirmative, the pair of cards are set aside. The game continues until all pairs are set aside.

Variations on this could cover whatever vocabulary has been taught, eg. "Is there a packet of biscuits in the trolley/on the shelf/in the basket, etc.?"

- ***Paired Action Sequence***

  i) Student 1 has a card of action pictures (perhaps 8), each of which has a clock face and a written description of the activity, eg: 8 o'clock: has a shave. Student 2 has a card that has lists of comprehension questions, eg: "What does Mario do first in the morning?/What does he do at 8'clock?/What time does he have breakfast?....."

  ii) Student 2 poses the questions. Student 1 answers.

- ***"Can I help you?" - buying clothes.***

  i) Draw items of clothes on large square of card, and have a set of coloured cards; or stick coloured advertisements for items of clothing onto card.

  ii) Each student 'customer' in turn takes a clothes card from the pile and a colour card.

  iii) The teacher, or student 'shop assistant' asks, "Can I help you?", and the 'customer' answers, "Yes, I'm looking for a [green] [jumper]/[pair of] [blue] [socks]. A blank 'joker' card could mean, "No thanks, I'm just looking."

- ***Cassettes***

For any spoken activity students can practise and build their confidence with their pair or small group, then rehearse in front of the class and finally record themselves on the cassette recorder. These tapes are good to listen to from time to time as the students' developing confidence and competence are clear to hear.

- ***Cross-Class Interviews***

Even if there is a difference in ASLPR levels (eg: a 0-0+ class and a 0+ - 1- class) an hour long exchange of information can be very fruitful.

- ***Prediction Activities (including Reading & Listening)***

Aural Cloze Exercises

  i) Using pre-recorded, or your own taped dialogues, have students complete cloze passages listening either for a very specific piece of information (eg. a time/name/age), or for patterns of English across different settings, or interchangeable language elements (eg. "Can I help you/Are you right?")

ii) You may either choose to have students listening to the cassette before they see the text or reading the text first and discussing possible solutions before they hear the cassette.

- ***Build a Conversion on the Board***

  i) Two students, or a student and the teacher are the scribes. The setting is decided upon, (eg: "We're are in a hardware shop/the local milkbar/a railway station ...")

  ii) Half the class is the 'customer', the other is the 'shop assistant/service giver'. One scribe writes for each group.

  iii) Students recall the necessary dialogue elements, and correct each other until they are satisfied that they have a 'good sentence' and then they dictate it to the scribe. Invite the students to be as inventive as they can, and then to deal with the situation that arises.

  iv) The completed conversation can be drilled, or modified by pairs of students role playing, and can be recorded.

- ***Picture Story***

  i) Cut up pictures that form story sequences (eg. from *Composition Through Pictures* or *Action English Pictures*). Write the story sentences that match the pictures on the board or on slips of paper.

  ii) Give each small group of students a complete set of the cut-up pictures and have the students match the sentences with the pictures and then sequence the whole story. If there is any unknown language, they will have to deduce the meaning themselves. The resulting story strips and captions can be stuck on large sheets of paper and the different groups can compare their versions, discussing any discrepancies.

- ***Jumbled Interviews***

  i) Write up on card several different 'social chat' dialogues of 15 or so questions that include variations (Nationality, Address, Phone, Marital Status, Number of Children, Jobs, Likes and Dislikes, etc.). Cut each dialogue up and put the questions in one envelope and the answers in a second.

  ii) Students work in pairs. Student 1 reads and sorts the questions into order behind a book, and then asks these questions of student 2, who chooses the correct reply from his/her jumbled answers. Together they build up the conversation.

  iii) When the dialogue has been completed, they can match the slips, and read it through again, and perhaps record it.

With several different dialogues, students can practise more than one in a class without repetition.

- ***Charades***

  i) Make a set of stimulus cards that are placed face down on the table.

  ii) Students come out in turns (perhaps the winner of the previous round is the next performer, or she/he can nominate a student who has not yet had a turn) and mime the picture or sentence they find on the card they pick up. The class has to guess what the performer is miming and has to give the answer in correct sentence form (I/He/She and corresponding verb form).

Here are some topics and grammar points that work well:

- Health (I've got a sore throat/stomach ache' I'm tried; I feel hot/dizzy ...")
- Prepositions ("The X is on/in/under . . . the table/chair/wall ...")
- Jobs ("I'm a builder/teacher/waitress ..")
- Adjectives and Opposites ("I'm hot/cold, old/young, weak/strong ....")
- "Likes and Dislikes ("I like/don't like to eat/dance/swim/take photos ...",.or "I like/don't like apples/cats/the cinema ...")

Grammar Activities (including Reading and Writing)

- ***Cut up sentences***
  - i) Write up sentences or short question and answer sequences related to a topic or grammar point onto card. Cut these up into separate words, or word clusters. Put into envelopes. Always make more than the number of students in your class as some students work a lot faster than others.
  - ii) Hand out one envelope to each student, who then reconstructs the sentence or sequence, reads it aloud to the teacher and/or writes it in his/her note book before taking a second envelope, and repeating the procedure.
  - iii) Once students know this activity, you can add a further task by having each of the envelope sequences being elements of a complete conversation (eg: buying a pair of shoes - there might be up to 15 question/answer elements in such a conversation). Once they have reconstructed their own, the students read their sequence aloud to each other, and so discuss and build up the entire dialogue in the correct order. This completed dialogue can be glued to a large card.

I find that a mixture of simple and complex sentences, or long and short sequences, discretely marked as such on the envelopes can help balance how quickly different students complete the task and how much satisfaction they get from it.

All topics can work well. Here are some :

- Shopping
- Asking for directions
- Making introductions
- Talking about your family
- Inquiring about health
- Talking about daily routines

- ***Living Sentences***
  - i) Write up a sentence on card. Cut it up and give each student one word.
  - ii) Students have physically to put themselves in the correct order and recite their own word, having memorised and practised the pronunciation.

This activity can include a lesson on stress (eg: "This is the important word, so this student must speak loudly.")

- ***Captions for Posters*** - for vocabulary, prepositions, sentence structure.
  - i) Enlarge a picture twice.
  - ii) Glue the pictures to poster card, labelling one 'What is it?' and the other 'Where it it?'
  - iii) Number all the objects on the 'What is it?' poster. Give all students one or more slips of card with a number on it. Students match their number with the numbered object on the poster and write the name of the object (lamp, chair, dog, tree ...) on their numbered slip and glue the slip to the poster.
  - iv) Each student is then given a slip of card with a preposition on it. They write a rough draft of a sentence that describes something in the poster, and after checking with the teacher or a fellow student, they transcribe their sentence on to a slip of card and paste it on to the 'Where is it?' poster.

- ***Class Correction.***

After any writing activity, students can each write one of their sentences or responses on the board. The whole class looks at and corrects the sentences, if necessary. This way the students get double exposure to the language of the exercise.

- ***Photo Essays.***

A) If you photograph class events like excursions, morning teas, special activities, etc., you can use the photos as stimulus material for journal writing, or for making a class book or poster of the event. You can teach or revise present continuous, simple past, action verbs, prepositions, etc.

B) i) Invite students to bring in their favourite photo or a family photo. The students each write about their photo - who is in it, what they are doing, etc. - you can structure the language as much as you like.

ii) The students then swap photos and write in the third person about each other's photos.

Vocabulary Activities (including Speaking and Writing)

Name numbered objects on wall posters (see Captions for Posters above). It can be a recycle for food, parts of the body, furniture, etc. It's a good warm - up activity as there is a fair bit of moving around involved.

- ***Picture Revision.***

One student plays teacher and asks the class to name the object or picture etc. that she is pointing to. A further element is added if the answering student has to dictate spelling to a scribe who writes the word on the poster or the board.

- ***Junk Mail.***
  - i) Collect several copies of catalogues and bargain brochures.
  - ii) In class students name the goods, compare prices or even compare two different shops' sales to revise 'cheaper than', etc.

- ***Back - To - Back Pair Work.***

  i) In pairs, students sit back to back. Student 1 has a card with a name and street address on it. Student 2 has a card with a phone number and a suburb on it.

  ii) Students must dictate the missing information to each other.

  * This is a very good exercise for revising numbers, but can be used for spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary lists (ie: shopping lists), etc.

- ***Wonder Word / Word Search.***

  i) Prepare a grid of 10 - 20 squares a side, and write in the vocabulary of the topic or theme you wish to revise. Fill in the blank squares with random letters. Decide on the degree of difficulty your students can cope with : perhaps words are only written horizontally, left - to - right; or perhaps they are placed vertically, diagonally, back to front, etc.

  ii) Either list the hidden words at the side of the word square, or tell the students, eg: " There are 10 Health words in here. Can you find them?"

- ***Snap / Concentration.***

  i) Make a set of pairs of playing cards, of either words, or words and their picture equivalents.

  ii) Lay all cards face down. Playing in small groups, each student picks up two cards in turn, saying the words / pictures out loud. If the cards match, the student can keep the pair. If not, the next student will try to remember where the previous cards lay.

  iii) The ' winner' is the student with the most pairs of cards when they have all been matched.

- ***Classification.***

  i) Write up a jumble of words, under which you have ruled columns with headings, eg : Fruit, Vegetables, Meat, Drinks ; or items from the butcher, jeweller, newsagent, hardware; etc.

  ii) Students find and write down all the words under their correct heading.

  * A variation of this is on p. 92 of *The Priority Course* where students classify shopping items according to the container they come in. Again, this activity can be extended when students write their groupings on the board and the class discusses the lists to correct them.

- ***Kim's Game.***

  i) Put an assortment of objects on a tray and cover it.

  ii) After preliminary activities (see below) uncover tray and allow students 1 - 2 minute to memorise what they have seen. Recover tray, and students write out their lists.

  iii) Compile the full and correctly spelt list on the board with the help of students.

  * Memorisation is a basic learning skill that many low education background students do not have, some introduction and explanation might be necessary. You can start by writing a street or suburb name on the board, and then rubbing it off after instructing students to ' look hard'. Have one student dictate the spelling back to you. If incorrect repeat the same process with the same name ; if correct practise with a new name each time. You can then move to a poster that has not only items, but different numbers of items on it. The first look is to memorise the items (fruit....), the second is to memorise how many of each. Write up student's responses on the board and check for correctness.

- ***Memory Joggers.***

  i) These are short tests in the form of fill - in - the - gap exercises. Make up sheets of topic related words as follows:

  (Topic Health) — — zz —, t — re — , — 11, — e l — , etc.

  (Grammar: Opposites) — 1 d / y — — — — g, f a — / t h — n, etc.

  ii) Introduce the activity by saying, " We all know these words, they're about health / how you feel / housing, etc." Students can use their note books, if necessary, to recall spelling.

Resources

Here is a short list of suggested titles to get you started on devising your own activities to recycle previously taught language.

Clemens and Crawford, ***Lifelines.*** NCRC Adelaide 1986.

Some good reuseable recycling activities on pp 14,15, and there are several suggestions for activities described in the introduction to each unit.

Frank and Rinvolucri, ***Grammar in Action.*** Prentice - Hall 1987.

Many activities are pitched for 1 + and up, but several of the 'Ice Breakers' are good communicative group - awareness activities. Beware of statements like ".. if the students are old enough to have a firm idea of how a graph works. " [(p. 22 my emphasis]

Granger and Hicks, ***Contact English 1: Students' Book.*** Heinemann Educational Books 1986.

The ' Pictures for Drills' (final pages of the book) can be used in a variety of ways as conversation, survey or role play stimulus cards in pair or group work.

Hadfield, *Harrap's* ***Communication Games.*** Nelson Harrap 1984.

A book of games material that is easily reproduced onto card and covered for durability. Each game has clear instructions, and many of the games can be used at low language levels. It includes such topics as Socialising, Shopping, Orientation, Telling the Time; and Language elements such as action verbs, likes and dislikes, description, etc.

Lee, ***Language Teaching Games and Contests.*** OUP 1982.

Good range including pronunciation games. Some elementary material is aimed at children, some at adults.

Le Good & Haskin, ***The Priority Course.*** AMES Victoria 1984.

Each unit has suggested activities and work sheets that can be used or modified easily.

McCallum, ***101 Word Games.*** OUP 1980.

Similar coverage to Lee (above).

Winn – Bell Olsen, ***Look Again Pictures.*** The Alemany 1984.

Spot-the-difference pictures with many related activities for each.

There are some commercial games that are suitable for recycling language, eg: " Guess Who?", "Concentration", and various word domino card games.

6

ADAPTING TEACHING STRATEGIES

Anne Badenhorst

This article reproduces the report of a project undertaken as part of the AMES Victoria Research Program during 1989.

Background

Teachers in AMES realise the importance of refining criteria for learner grouping. This project examines the implications of grouping learners according to their different educational backgrounds.

Rationale

The project looked at how I could adapt my teaching strategies and materials to address the specific needs and learning styles of learners with low levels of education. I expected the learners would be highly motivated and that they would be unfamiliar with the routines and processes of the formal classroom practice. Thus it would be important to both monitor their responses to current classroom practice and to examine how teachers could modify their approach to match the learner's expectations and learning styles.

Aims

The aims of the project were to

a) examine, monitor and assess materials used in terms of learner response to tasks and

b) to document teaching strategies suitable for learners with low levels of education.

Methodology

I planned then implemented a unit of work. This unit was monitored through observation, audio recording and my diary. I then analysed the classroom interactions and modified the next unit of work accordingly.

The Class

The student at Collingwood AMEC are at this time assigned toclasses according to ASLPR level and educational background. A low educational background, in this setting, is considered to be eleven years of education and under.

This project was conducted in Term 3, 1989 in an ASLPR level 1 class with students with low educational backgrounds (henceforth low ed).

Class Composition

	ASLPR levels	Education	Language	Sex	Age	Time in Aust.
	S L R W					
**	1 1 1 1 –	2 years	Hmong	M	24	7 m'nths.
**	1 1 1 1 –	4 years	Viet	M	24	4 yrs.
**	1 1 1 1	5 years	Kmpu	M	26	4 m'nths.
**	1 1 1 1	5 years	Kmpu	M	25	4 m'nths.
**	1 1 1 1	7 years	Fiji	M	44	1.5 yrs
**	1+1-1+1–	9 years	Canton	M	42	2 yrs
**	1-1 1 1	9.years	Hmong	M	41	2 yrs
**	1 1 1-0+	9 years	Kmpu	M	28	1 yr
**	1-1 1 1	10 years	Viet	M	53	9 yrs
**	1- 1 1 1	10 years	Viet	M	26	2 yrs
**	1 1 1 1	16 years	Chin	M	65	2 yrs
*	1- 1 1 1	13 years	Pol	M	42	4 m'nths
*	1 1 1 1	15 years	Viet	F	35	4 m'nths
*	1 1 1 1–	12 years	Cze	M	31	2 yrs
*	1-1-1 1	12 years	Viet	F	23	3 yrs
*	1 1 1 1	12 years	Afg	M	26	1 yr

As is apparent, there were some students who did not fit the criteria. This was due to work or family demands which meant they could only attend this class. I have marked those students I grouped as the low ed learners with two stars. This grouping was made according to the student's learning style not according to their levels of education though, with the exception of the Chinese man with 16 years of education these are consistent.

I would also add that the two students with high levels of education who were newly arrived were usually comfortable with the pace of the class. I feel this may have been because they were both very unsettled and nervous. When they were frustrated by the class activity they were happy to work with the other three high ed students. The other three high ed students were very badly placed in this class and much of their work in class was negotiated separately. They certainly had an effect on any class activity and would have dominated all activities if given the opportunity.

Some factors which seemed to influence the rather obvious divisions in the class and are therefore relevant when considering educational background are **age** and **disruption of schooling**. The Chinese man with sixteen years of education was appropriately placed in this class and I suspect his age and the time since he was in a formal classroom situation may have been factors. Both the Vietnamese men with ten years of education had very disrupted schooling. As children they missed as much as eight months of a given school year due to the farming and fishing obligations of their families so in fact had even lower levels of education than they claimed. Though not related to this project it seems obvious that new arrivals also need special consideration.

Student Motivation

Of the eleven students in the class who were low ed learners, eight had been in Australia for one year or longer. All were reasonably confident that they would manage in Melbourne and had discovered that their daily business could be conducted in their first language or with the English they already had. They were also familiar with the Interpreter Service. Four of the students were working, four had given up work to study; two because they were needed at home, one because he was waiting for a better job in the factory where he had been working and one because he wanted to be a tailor here and felt that more English was necessary. Two students were newly arrived and said they wanted to learn English before they went to work but they had no specific work in mind, and one was retired. I feel this is relevant as only one student needed English for a specific purpose. The others had very vague reasons for studying English and really could not come to terms with the question "Why are you studying English?" Most of the students were pleased with their jobs or job prospects and their standard of living. They did not see a career path before them nor did they seem to have any idea of "progress" as we see it. I feel this has implications with regard to the counselling of these students as well as determining which classroom materials are relevant.

Differences

I worked very closely with the teacher of the high educational background (henceforth high ed) class at ASLPR level 1. We had expected to follow a very similar course determined by a survey from the *National Curriculum Frameworks*. The high ed class moved ahead within the first few weeks of term. They covered significantly more in terms of vocabulary, language and topics. I argue that this is because the low ed class is not just dealing with the topic and the language or vocabulary presented but is also learning how the formal classroom operates, how to manipulate what is presented and in simple terms, how to learn.

My students had a more difficult time remembering. They were also noticeably upset when they had forgotten something or made an error and this had considerable influence on their performance in class. The high ed class were not distressed by errors and were comfortable asking for correction or prompting. This obviously led to difference in the preparation of lessons. For my class, material had to be recycled and presented in a way which built in success. It also suggested that remembering needed to be practised. Furthermore my students needed to try out new language and make mistakes in a situation where errors did not seem significant. This involved greater emphasis on pair or group work and games.

My students could not deal with large amounts of new language. The high ed student would jot down any number of new language items with a translation or note and then proceed to try it out in a number of situations until it worked. Students in my class would rarely use new language of their own volition and did not write down anything casually. This seemed significant because it indicated that language was not something my students could manipulate or play with and that writing was a formal process more than an aid to memory.

Instruction were of a particular concern to me. The high ed class could generally understand any set of instructions where as my class seemed often to have more difficulty with the instructions than the task. I found in lesson preparation I had to spend considerably more time on how I would present the material in terms of my own language and that I had to note all potential problems and prepare my students to deal with them. I also found it necessary to simplify worksheets and that I used fewer handouts. Often an example was much more effective than written instructions. These most definitely needed to be taught and instructions such as "answer in full sentences", "fill in the blank" and "tick the box" caused much consternation in my class.

The most telling difference between these two classes was in the use of folders. At the beginning of the term we sold folders, lined paper and dividers to both classes. The high ed class accepted the divisions suggested and proceeded to use each of the sections immediately. My class were quite concerned with the divisions suggested and spent some time discussing them, I then had to tell them where to put any item I handed out. I had very few chances to check my students folders as I felt I had to respect their property but it seemed to me they were not generally well organised. The students usually had great difficulty referring back to any work unless I told them where to find it and this I must add did not necessarily mean they could locate it .

Units of Work

I have written up two of the units of work from the Term to illustrate my concerns and the subsequent modifications.

The first followed a unit on Health and was designed to clarify the problems the students were having with the imperative as they had come across this language on labels, in prescriptions and in doctor's instructions.

As this was a much more grammar based unit than usual I wanted to make sure the students saw the language as relevant and authentic. I was also worried they would struggle with the rules and be unable to use the language.

The second was on Signs and followed a unit on Directions. It was designed to use authentic material in a way which gave the students a chance to use what they knew and to use this knowledge in English. I was specifically trying to create a situation where there was a chance for the students to see how much language they had to draw on. I did not want to provide as much language as I had in the first unit.

The First Unit

1. To introduce commands.

The students arrived to find the classroom a mess. I gave commands to tidy it.

We put 'command words' on the board.

Students sat in groups and using stimulus cards took turns giving commands to each other.

I wrote the rules of the imperative on the board.

a. No person in the sentence NOT he, she or me

b. Not polite NO please or thank you

c. Present tense.

I held up pictures and students gave appropriate commands.

I gave each table some of the pictures to write commands.

Comments

I should have divided students into groups to practise giving commands with the pictures before getting them to write. Errors occurred with the longer commands so they needed more opportunity to try out the language.

2. I used an idea from *Curriculum Frameworks* to introduce the negative.

I drew a picture on the board of a man driving a car with two children fighting in the back seat. I elicited language regarding what they might be doing . I then elicited the sentences the father might say. We divided his sentences into two groups-those with don't and those without. Students worked in their groups to role play (taking turns as the father) and to think of one or more sentence he might say.

Students worked on hand out.

Students had to change the commands from the previous lesson into the negative.

Comments

This was a very amusing lesson with lots of laughter and fun. It was interesting to note that two of the high ed students wrote their own rule for the negative with their rules for the imperative.

3. To use the imperative and to give instructions.

I asked students to find the medicine label from a previous lesson and we considered it in light of the 'rules'.

I gave out papers and gave instructions to make a paper airplane.

Students gathered around the table and gave me instructions to tie my shoe (using up, on in, around, through and pull) and then to brush my teeth.

A student wrote instructions on the board (with everyone's help).

I removed words and we read the instruction, I then removed more words and we read it again, this was repeated until there was very little left on the board.

In small groups put pictures of processes in order and then wrote instructions with key verbs provided.

Comments

The same two high ed students added 'first, next then' to their rules. Most of the other students failed to make any connection between giving instructions and commands until it was pointed out to them. Tie a shoe was too difficult but I was not very particular so it worked. It was good to have stayed around the table and close to the board as it meant more students helped in the writing.

4. To see this language as part of their useable language and to use a grid.

I got students to give me examples of commands, instructions, advice and requests.

We then talked about polite or formal language and informal or friendly language

We then talked about who you must be polite to and when you can be more informal.

We put this information on a grid and students copied it into their books.

We listened to the Jazz Chant *"Easy Solutions"* and put the "solutions" on the board; I had given the complaints.

Comments

Some students had problems with the grid though I feel the idea worked very well and students saw this as directly relevant to them. An interesting discussion regarding the Jazz Chant, decided it must be a parent speaking.

Modifications

Too much of the language in Unit 1 was imposed on the students. The rules for the Imperative did not seem to be of any use and though the grid was a very worthwhile activity there was a lot of language and I needed a better stimulus. I am the focus of too much of the lesson and therefore students are too often 'on display' so more small group work is necessary.

The Second Unit

1. To reuse directions and vocabulary from excursion to Health Centre and to begin working with signs.

I drew a picture of the hospital and students named the departments. Students did worksheet from *Hello Australia.*

I have out signs and students had to categorise, ie. Hospital signs, Road signs, Safety signs.

The groups checked each others categories.

The signs were glued on paper in the categories.

For home work students had to write/draw a sign they see on the way home.

Comments

Categorising took a long time and generated much discussion.I did not pull up students for using their first language. The high ed. students finished very quickly and had very little discussion, they went on to do an exercise from *Real Life Reading*.

2. To write instructions/explanations for the signs and to be aware of the difference.

We looked at signs students had written down for homework and wrote instructions for three and explanations for two. We discussed the differences and looked at our categorized signs which we divided further into those that 'tell us to do something' and those that 'tell us about something'.

In groups students were given a category and wrote the instructions or explanations on an OHP transparency.

These were then corrected by the class.

The correct sentences were copied into folders as well as onto butcher's paper which was put up beside the signs.

Comments

I had a very difficult time keeping the high ed students from dominating the correction even though they had work they hadn't finished. The correction was very slow but the students were very involved.

3. To allow all students to work with a new set of signs.

I had cut up the signs and sentences from the posters and students in their groups were to match signs to sentences. These were then checked by the 'writers'.

As groups finished at different times I had a pamphlet of signs to be looked at.

Any of these which interested students were drawn and added to the appropriate category.

We played Kim's game with the signs.

Comments

Students had very little difficulty with this activity and seemed to enjoy checking each others' work. They were very interested in the pamphlet so obviously this is relevant to them.

4. Students to see how much English they do know and to see their work as valuable.

I typed up student's sentences and put these with the signs. Students had to match the sentence to the sign.

In groups as they finished students played the General Signs Game.

In the same groups worked on reading comprehension with directions and signs.

Comments

Nothing in this lesson was unfamiliar to the student except some vocabulary in the reading comprehension and my role was very low key. This seems to be the ideal classroom situation for these students. In fact this unit was successful for much the same reasons.

Successful Teaching Strategies

The most crucial strategies are simply to allow the students to start from what they know, to work in groups or pairs, to ensure that the students have adequate chances to try out their English and most importantly to ensure that the students will experience success.

Language must be recycled and used in a variety of situations. This allows the student to practise the language in different situations and therefore to begin to transfer learned items to different situations (something that does seem to be very difficult), as well as to begin to see patterns in English.

Many of the standard exercises in the classroom are very difficult. Instructions must be simplified, in fact examples or a demonstration are much more effective. Processes such as reading a grid or determining true or false may need to be taught and explained.

It seems also that an informal environment with lots of talk and interaction suits these students. They are easily intimidated and are in constant need of confidence building.

The teaching in the low ed class is also the teaching of learning strategies. These students need to work on the development of skills for learning on their own as well as in the classroom. This involves activities to develop and highlight the importance of memory and categorising. The student must also be made aware of reference tools such as the dictionary and taught to see experience outside the classroom as opportunities to learn English. These students must also be taught to organize their own learning and to evaluate their own performance.

What I have tried to highlight in this project is that the activities, the topics and even the language taught in a low ed class are not so different from those taught in a high ed class. The point I wish to make is that much of the material we use and strategies we employ take a great deal for granted. Once known this is glaringly obvious. However, based on my experience, this is not obvious to a new teacher. It seems crucial to group learners by their educational background, but then it is also necessary to provide a new teacher with an understanding of the situation. The difference between a low ed class and a high ed class is in the learning skills of the students and the confidence they have in their own ability. Teaching strategies must address this difference, not ignore it.

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7

A Class Report

Lilliana Hajncl

Introduction

This is an excerpt from a report of an action research project conducted during 1989 in AMES Victoria. The research looked at teaching strategies suitable for learners with low levels of education.

The Class

The project was conducted during Term 3, 1989. We took Low Education Background (LEB) to mean 8 years or less of education. The class was made up of fifteen 0 level students, most of whom has between four and seven years of education.

The students gave one or a combination of the following reasons for having left school when they did:

1) War

2) The family situation (death of parents, size of family)

3) The economic situation of the family (where students had to pay to attend High School)

4) Cultural expectations (where girls worked to support brothers through secondary school).

What they have in common, though, is that none have a long tradition of abstract learning. All students had difficulties with some or all of the tasks on Linda Achren's (Collingwood AMES) Learning Skills Test: classification, aerial view, grid work, reading a family tree and alphabet tasks.

The students ranged in age from 21 to 39 years, and had been in Australia between one week and two years (all but two had been here less than 5 months) at the start of the course. This is perhaps different from how we usually see LEB learners - older, longer term Australian resident.

The students came from Vietnam (9), Timor (1), Poland (1), El Salvador (1), Uruguay (1), Chile (1) and Mauritius (1)

Throughout the term the class size diminished, as one student found a job, two experienced childcare problems and one moved away from the area but later commented that she had found the work too difficult for her.

The classes ran for two hours Monday to Friday. I would like to recommend straightaway that two hours a day is not adequate for an On-Arrival program, especially where there is a LEB group involved, if we are to teach learning skills as well as language content. Two hours a day also simply does not allow adequate time for the sorts of concrete, real world (out of classroom) activities such as excursions of familiarisation with public transport and local services, that enable students to see and to practise their language learning in context.

From the outset the class was very communicatively oriented. Twice when they could not understand what was required of them in a communicative task, they went ahead, modifying the task to achieve a language result similiar to one originally sought.

I include two student profiles:

> Eliette, who has 6 years education and is a seamstress 'overachieved' in the sense that she often made a much more detailed and complex response than was required to both oral and written exercises, although she had only good basic literacy in her L1 and English. She was impatient in class and would prompt other students. She had great difficulty completing Linda Achren's Learning Skills Test, and begged the teacher for assistance to "find the key". Most of her home study was verbal, and she practised regularly with her sons (Year 11 and 12 students) and friends who had lived for many years in Australia.
>
> Nghia, who has 6 years education and was a fisherman, absorbed new information slowly, and often didn't grasp what was required in a task. He never responded directly to a question put to him (either by the teacher or by a fellow student) but sought assistance from one of the other Vietnamese speakers. He was, however, the only one of the whole class who immediately understood and accurately completed the four alphabet tasks in the Learning Skills Test. He could rapidly complete information gap grammar exercises and classification exercises but couldn't use a grid to elicit and provide information or understand what was required of him for Kim's Game (memorising objects and writing the list) despite repeated explanations. Most of his home study was written, and he appeared to be being taught to use classroom reference tools by his six daughters who were attending local primary and high schools.

All the students were very motivated to learn, and several indicated through the bi-lingual support staff that they had already observed differences between Australian classrooms and those of their own countries. One student commented that she found this "refreshing".

Finally, as part of the funding for the project, we were able to conduct 7 two hour evaluation, negotiation and consultation sessions with bi-lingual support.

Course Content

At the beginning of term course objectives were set. I had hoped to negotiate with the students in the bi-lingual sessions to develop these, however most students simply expressed the desire to "learn English", and to learn some job seeking skills. The students could identify the macro-skills they saw as important (speaking and writing), and the one student who had attended a previous course had expectations that resulted from her experience (the number of teaching hours, and the desire for only one teacher through the whole term); but the students could not, at the beginning of term, specify expectations/preferences of content or teaching-learning styles, nor did they wish to list in order of importance a choice of topics presented to them.

The course objectives were arrived at

(a) After reading *Frameworks: New Arrivals*,

(b) After discussion with other teachers at the centre;

(c) By my preference for a concrete, topic-based approach;

(d) From materials that had already been used successfully (including my own work, and texts such as *Lifelines*,*The Priority Course*, *Starters' Dialogues*, etc.)

By Week 8, the students had a much clearer idea of, and had the confidence to talk about the topics and language areas they still wanted to cover before the end of term (such areas as talking to teachers at their children's schools, using the bank, using the telephone).

The planned topics and objectives were substantially similiar to those listed on page 29 of *Frameworks: New Arrivals*, barring 'Accidents and other Emergencies', but including 'Using the Telephone and Directory', and 'Jobs".

The topics were presented cyclically, rather than linearly; and so not all elements of each topic were covered, and the topics 'Jobs', 'Using the Telephone and Directory' and 'Accommodation' were only barely broached, as I found that I had to work much more slowly, and recycle and revise more frequently than I had anticipated.

Although based on a topic approach, I never felt bound by a topic: it was not the be-all and end-all of the lesson. Often the topic would be secondary to teaching a learning strategy, or an earlier lesson and topic would be recalled to show similiar language elements.

Strategies, Activities, Techniques

Susan Chou Allender's "Some Strategies for Informal Learners" was the starting point.

Content

(1) Base content on concrete experience, and link to real life language and tasks. This means:

- using a lot of objects in class for students to see and handle while they practise the language;
- using concepts that are demonstrable as they are much more readily grasped than non-demonstrable ones;
- including task-oriented activities to help establish the relevance of the language elements. These included:

a) a morning tea to which bi-lingual assistants and other staff were invited (language of introduction, offering, accepting, declining, social chat);

b) elementary map reading leading to . . .

c) a shopping excursion, to buy ingredients for. . .

d) cake making in the classroom;

e) daily greeting and weather/news item in the class and with friends/at home;

f) telephoning the Centre if unable to attend class;

g) information seeking at local services eg. Railway Station - timetables, maps, details of interstate and country trips; Post Office; Police Station - asking for directions, details of how and where to obtain Driver's Licence;

h) reading medicine labels;

i) registering at the local health centre (without bi-lingual assistance);

j) describing/explaining personal photographs to other members of the class.

(2) Connect units of work, and ensure the sequence/connection can be clearly seen by, or is explained to the students.

(3) Use initial and on-going needs analysis and evaluation to tailor the course to students' needs (methodology, content, speed, relevance).

Consultation

(1) Involve students in the needs analysis and evaluation process - that is, consult students about their response to work done and methodologies/strategies employed. Ensure they are involved in content and task negotiation.

(2) Use bi-lingual assistance, where possible, for formal consultation/evaluation sessions.

Strategies and Skills

(1) Encourage students to focus on their own, and each others' learning strategies, teach further strategies.

(2) Help students to develop study skills eg. home study, organisation of folders. The students requested regular homework. This took various forms, partly to encourage them to see how they could structure their own study time at home. Tasks included:

a) practising dialogue aloud for recording or use in real life setting;

b) memorising new vocabulary;

c) classification activities;

d) watching the weather forecast on TV and listening for known and new words; aurally identifying and selecting words from a given list; reading and listening for maximum and minimum temperatures;

e) grammar sheets and information-gap exercises;

f) reading junk mail for specific information;

g) predicting content from dialogue models.

Organisation

(1) Break new information into manageable units.

(2) Present and deal with one (1) task at a time.

(3) Establish a classroom routine (eg. start with date/weather/news item) and establish identifiable language to conclude each activity.

(4) Allow short breaks between tasks (time for review, reflection and application).

Presentation

(1) Use multi-sensorial channels, the concrete of the demonstrable being more easily grasped and giving confidence.

(2) Use adult themes, but present the language sequentially regarding difficulty.

(3) Recycle information, language items, concepts, don't repeat.

(4) Assess the degree of difficulty/abstraction of the tasks/games/visuals to ensure that it does not overpower or negate the language acquisition.

Performance

(1) Allow an adequate silent period.

(2) Reduce physical distance between yourself and learners.

(3) Interact with them on a one-to-one basis.

(4) Offer a caring and supporting environment to enhance each student's self-concept and self-esteem.

Some Comparisons between LEB and HEB 0 level classes

With reference to the above strategies, I compared the 0 level low education background (LEB) class with a similiar ASLPR high education background (HEB) class (20 students) through monitoring, and discussion with the class teacher.

With the LEB class the starting point was often different, eg. no prior knowledge of such reference skills as using a dictionary or map reading; or a need to teach a classroom skill such as using cloze or reading a grid chart; or no elementary vocabulary for a new topic.

This meant that a longer time was taken to introduce a new skill prior to introducing new language.

For this reason, too, tasks were often simpler, short, less abstract.

The HEB class often pursued a topic further, and learned bigger chunks of new language, whereas with the LEB class a cyclical rather than linear approach was used (smaller language components could be introduced, recycled and reinforced across two or three topics before moving to more sophisticated language elements in the original topic).

With the LEB class there was a lot of vocabulary into known language structures, eg. Shopping:

I want	}	clothes
I need		tools
I'd like		food items
I'm looking for		household necessities

The speed of the lesson was different. With the LEB class there was more 'why we're doing it', and linking explanation and contextualising, a greater number of examples given, though not necessarily longer teacher instruction time as the emphasis was on simple tasks. I found that the students rapidly lost confidence if they couldn't understand the task, or see the point of an activity. Students also spent longer practising the language in pair or group work, or using the cassette.

The LEB class covered fewer topics but concentrated more on revision and recycling of previously taught work. Both classes used games and task - oriented activities.

The HEB class used dictionaries and other reference materials more frequently and more confidently than the LEB class, who relied more on bilingual support (this often meant dashing out of class to find the Vietnamese DPO or the Spanish-speaking staff member!) Once a classroom routine or strategy was taught to the LEB class, the students started to use it, slowly learning to handle it effectively. As they found they could use the new tool to learn, their confidence developed and they participated more readily in a wider range of tasks.

As a teacher, I found that I increasingly simplified tasks to go back to the concrete, before launching into the language elements I wanted to teach. I also reduced the number of handouts I used, and simplified their format. I discovered in Week 9 of the course that a student could not understand a task that required vertical - horizontal grid reading to find information (he could understand the information, he just couldn't see it) and yet every week for the previous eight weeks he had completed the course evaluation sheet (a modification of that on page 33 of *Lifelines* which was formatted in the same grid pattern.

Evaluation and Consultation Sessions

Each week a discussion and evaluation session was conducted, with bi-lingual assistance given by teachers at the Centre (the languages spoken were Polish, Spanish, Vietnamese, French and Chinese).

The students first completed an evaluation sheet where they assessed how well they had understood each topic, task or language element; how difficult the task had been; how useful and whether or not they enjoyed performing it. Topics, methodology and approach were modified in the following weeks to give students more of what they wanted.

Students rated a best and worst activity each week, and were able to write suggestions in L1. From quite early in the course students saw the importance of the sessions as a chance to express themselves freely - to discuss, question, request, respond. They saw value in having their own voice, and gradually overcome their desire to answer to please the teacher, and become more critical of their own progress and of class structure and content. (cf *A Year later*, AMES 1988 pp 13–14)

The second half of each hour long bilingual session covered such things as:

- What to expect in an Australian classroom
- Use of the ILC
- Discussions about learning strategies
- Information sessions on course and job opportunities
- Verbal assessments of student's progress (at the students' request) and
- suggestions for overcoming problems.

An example : the students each described the learning strategies they used outside the classroom. These were translated and compiled in simplified English under macro - skill headings into a poster - size list. This was discussed in a later bilingual session to raise the student's awareness of the range of possibilities and to encourage them to use a variety of them. (see also *A Year Later* AMES 1988 p. 19)

In a later session again, we discussed more formal study skills and how to employ them effectively.

From responses to the evaluation sheets the most popular activity each week and across weeks was conversation / pair work. Students also continued to value grammar. Initially games scored low. As the term went on confidence in games grew. (Sometimes these were labelled " games" and sometimes "activity". However students overcome their prejudice against " games".)

The activity that scored lowest each week always proved to be an activity that they saw as either much too hard or much too easy for them.

Learning Strategies

These were presented to the students either in class or in the bilingual sessions:

- making a personal dictionary (in alphabetical order)
- memorising (Kim's Game)
- spelling (Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check)
- following instructions (using a recipe, learning the rules)
- guessing / estimating
- predicting / inferring (modification of cloze; predicting word, question or answer in a conversation, then correcting by listening to a cassette)
- classifying (concrete objects, word lists of things learnt)
- organising folders
- critical listening / listening for specific details (TV programs, Weather, cassette)
- using the ILC
- recognising patterns (linking of learnt language elements across different tasks / content)
- evaluating relevance of content and learning tasks
- using language resources outside the classroom
- classroom skills (relating pictures to dialogue or language component, interpreting pictures)
- reference skills (elementary map reading, alphabetical order)
- assessing their own performance.

Integrating Low Education Background Students into Mainstream Classes: Some Suggestions

Low Education Background ((LEB) students in beginner level English classes can easily be mistaken for 'slow learners', as they struggle to grasp simultaneously the language and the formal classroom routines and abstract learning that High Education Background (HEB) students and the teacher take for granted.

LEB students are not slow learners, nor can we assume that they have no individual learning strategies (used in or out of the classroom), but we must recognise their need to develop the skills, routines and techniques that will allow them to learn confidently alongside their HEB fellow learners in an Australian classroom.

Frequently on-arrival students are placed in the ILC for a period until the start of a new term, or similar class break occurs. A well devised individual learning program, developed with the learner and monitored by the ILC staff, can mean a 0 level student is ready to enter a 0+ class by the start of the new term, in terms of language acquisition. If, however, classroom skills and 'learning how to learn' are not incorporated into this program, the student may rapidly lose his/her ability to keep up with the class and therefore his/her confidence as an English language learner.

I'd like to propose that an introductory or orientation course could be a useful means to help integrate LEB students into mainstream classes, so that their on-going English language learning will be a positive and successful experience.

This introductory or orientation course could take several forms. Here are only two possibilities:

1) If a weekly ILC program of five 2-hour daily sessions were broken into four sessions of independent language acquisition, and one session of a more formal lesson of developing both independent learning strategies and classroom skills, the problem of integration into classroom learning could be lessened.

The fifth or formal session could be run as a 'mini-class' of all LEB, low level English learners in the ILC. It could focus on such learning skills as:

- compiling a personal dictionary
- organising own work, maintaining and organising written work for later retrieval
- breaking work down into digestible sized chunks
- using reference tools such as dictionaries, timetables, calendars, simple maps
- developing memorisation skills
- understanding and visualising the abstract (teaching how to 'see' aerial views, plans, how to read grids and charts, etc.)
- understanding Australian classrooms (the 'informality', equality of teacher and student, the use of games, songs and movement, the importance of negotiating and the student's voice, the validity of task - oriented activities, etc.)
- using the real word as an extension of the classroom and making links to other situations where the learning approach can be used (watching TV, reading billboards and shop signs and packets and junk mail, 'eavesdropping' in shops and public transport, etc.)
- learning to recognise patterns of language and making links to other situations where that language can be used; and so on.

Given the current lack of availability of bilingual support, most of this needs to be done in very simple language (eg: " What do you do at home to help you learn English?" or " We want to remember these words. How do you remember? Do you write it down? Where do you write it down?" or " These are things we do in class to help us remember.", etc.) Some written translations of fundamental questions and language can be invaluable, and often can be compiled with help of higher level students or staff at your centre.

2) Students on the waiting list could be allocated to a ' holding class' on the criterion of LEB. This class could offer, for example, two 2-hour sessions a week that concentrated on a general strategies as listed above. Language acquisition would be incorporated but would be restricted to, perhaps, personal identification and social interaction, with an emphasis on developing speed and fluency

over a small number of utterances, and on recognising the emerging patterns of language.

There are practicalities to face and difficulties to overcome in establishing either of these courses, particularly in a small centre, eg. space and teacher availability; the number of students involved; how best to organise students to maximise any available bilingual support (ie. according to language groups); how to ascertain student suitability for the program (accurate information is not always easy to obtain at the initial interview).

If we consider, though, the already considerable emotional turmoil of the on - arrival LEB student, and his / her urgent and immediate need to function successfully in an English language classroom in order to become a confident and successful English language learner, we can see the validity and real value of any such introductory, orientation program.

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Jenny Ramm has taught in ESL programs in Thailand and Malaysia and has worked in research and curriculum development with a specific focus on learners with minimal education. Her publications include "Formal and informal education: implications for Adult ESL classes" - *Prospect 5:2* 1990, *Signposts: Access material for beginning ESL learners* (AMES Victoria 1992) and *Learners with minimal formal education* (AMES Victoria 1992).

This collection of articles has been written for practising teachers by practising teachers. It provides a wealth of practical techniques for teaching adults with very little literacy in either their first language or in English and demonstrates how sound language and literacy teaching theory can be realised in the adult classroom.

The teachers who have contributed their ideas and examples of their practice to this book are concerned to make the best use of the knowledge and skills learners already have. At the same time they acknowledge that learners with low levels of formal education or lack of classroom skills often proceed slowly and need a lot of support in their classroom learning.

Topics include:
- developing and adapting teaching materials
- developing map reading skills
- dealing with mixed level classes
- recycling activities
- course planning
- appropriate and successful teaching strategies
- sample texts and activities

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